TUMBLEBERRY AND CHICK

WILLIAM J. HOPKINS

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"HUH!" MR. CHICK MUTTERED GLOOMILY. "FOLLER OUR WISHES!" (*page* 70)

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BY

WILLIAM JOHN HOPKINS

Author of "The Clammer," "Burbury Stoke," "She Blows!" etc.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

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ILLUSTRATIONS

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Drawn by ARTHUR G. DOVE

TUMBLEBERRY AND CHICK

CHAPTER I

THE sun was shining through a light golden haze upon the bay, upon the breakwater, and upon the harbor. A gentle southwest wind was blowing, stirring the waters and making the little waves lap softly against the stones of the wharf, which lay deserted and inviting. In the pavilion at the head of the wharf, with its glass cases displaying candy, tobacco and cigars, its soda fountain, its penny-in-the-slot weighing machine, and its empty benches, the youthful proprietor of it all stood leaning on the counter, a pleasant expression of amusement and content upon his face. He seemed to be thinking of nothing in particular, but taking comfort in the cool breeze that blew through the open pavilion, and listening to the sound of its blowing and to the silence of a summer morning which was untroubled by the noises of man. He may have been thinking of nothing in particular; but he was gazing after two figures that were slowly making their way down the wharf. One of these two was very tall and very thin, the other very short and very fat.

Mr. Tumbleberry and Mr. Chick were walking down the wharf. Mr. Tumbleberry was six feet three in height, and he weighed one hundred and twenty-two pounds; Mr. Chick was five feet in height, and he weighed two hundred and twenty-one. They knew the exact figures, for they had just stopped at the pavilion and, at the suggestion of Mr. Tumbleberry, had tried to get weighed, both of them for one cent. Mr. Chick, also at the suggestion of Mr. Tumbleberry, had paid the cent, not without some plaintive remonstrance on his part. The remonstrance was unavailing, as Mr. Chick's remonstrances were apt to be; but their effort to get the equivalent of two cents with the expenditure of one had been unavailing also, and Mr. Chick suggested that Mr. Tumbleberry dig up a cent to pay for his own weighing. Mr. Tumbleberry thereupon dug, without result, averring that he had left all his money in his other clothes. Mr. Chick did not see his way clear to contradicting that statement with effect, and, at the further suggestion of Mr. Tumbleberry, he had paid the other cent.

When they had completed the process of getting weighed, and had discussed the matter in most of its bearings, Mr. Tumbleberry turned to the baskets, and absent-mindedly took up one of them. It chanced that he took up the one containing the two fishlines and nothing else. Mr. Chick, just stooping to take up the other basket, heard the scraping of the reels, and looked up.

"Look a-here, Tum," he said in a high, querulous voice, "you've gone and took up my basket. Why 'n't y' take yours?"

Mr. Tumbleberry smiled, and spoke in a deep rolling and rumbling bass.

"I took the handiest one," he answered. "'T was the one nearest t' my hand, an' I did n't look t' see what 's in it. Ne' mind, Chick, don't y' be sore. Jest take up the other one an' come on. The fish'll get tired o' waitin'."

"It's powerful heavy," Mr. Chick complained, as he straightened up with his load. "Two peck o' clams ain't what y' c'd call a feather's weight. Ain't these clams for somebody in pertic'lar? You'd never get two peck for bait."

"They're for Druce's folks," Mr. Tumbleberry rumbled gently. "But I ain't got t' deliver 'em yet awhile, not 'fore noon, anyway, an' it seemed a pity t' miss the chancet f'r a little fishin'. 'T ain't every day y' get such a good chancet, with such a lot o' good bait. We shan't use more'n a quart of 'em. An' Druce's folks ain't a-goin' to measure. It'll be all right, Chick. Don't y' worry."

"Oh, I ain't a-worryin'," Mr. Chick replied. "It's you that's sellin' the clams, not me. But they certainly are powerful heavy," he added, shifting the basket to his other arm.

"They ain't much more'n half as heavy for you's they'd be f'r me," remarked Mr. Tumbleberry.

"How d' y' make that out, Tum?"

Mr. Chick's question was a challenge in his high, penetrating voice.

"Why, Chick, you don't have t' hold 'em much more 'n half 's high fr'm the ground 's what I 'd have to. I sh'd think you 'd 'a' seen it."

Mr. Chick was silent for some time, while Mr. Tumbleberry strode on. Mr. Chick took nearly two steps to Mr. Tumbleberry's one. If Mr. Tumbleberry had walked fast, Mr. Chick would have had to run. But Tumbleberry never did walk fast.

"Tum," Mr. Chick said at last, "I did n't see it, an' I don't. This 'ere force o' gravity 's what makes them clams heavy, ain't it?"

Tumbleberry considered.

"I cal'late that 's so, Chick," he agreed.

"Well, the force o' gravity," Mr. Chick continued, "'s less the further you git away fr'm the ground; ain't it? Is it, or ain't it? I 'd like t' see you dispute that."

"Y' 're right, Chick. They ain't a doubt about it."

"Well, then!" said Mr. Chick in triumph. "They ain't 's heavy f'r you 's they be f'r me, f'r you don't have to hold 'em so close t' th' ground. Why, you *could n't* hold 'em so close to the ground, 'nless you stooped over. An' y' jest tell me this, Tum: is it or ain't it harder t' hold anything, whether you're straight or stoopin'? Is it or ain't it? Now, you jest tell me that."

Mr. Chick came to a halt, and set the basket of clams firmly upon the ground.

"What are you a-doin', Chick?" Mr. Tumbleberry inquired deliberately. "Ain't y' goin' fishin', or what is it?"

"Why," Mr. Chick retorted with some heat, "bein' 's they're your clams, an' bein' 's they're easier f'r you to carry 'n they be f'r me, seems t' me you'd ought t' carry 'em. I've carried 'em fur enough."

Mr. Tumbleberry was not disconcerted.

"You did n't understand, Chick," he explained in the gentle tones of distant, rolling thunder. "It's the liftin' of 'em that makes it hard. An' I have to lift 'em near twice 's high 's you do. You can't deny that."

Mr. Chick shook his head. He stood near the basket, and regarded it doubtfully.

"Well, what y' waitin' for? If I sh'd have to do twice 's much work 's what you would, it stands t' reason you'd ought t' carry 'em. We're a'most there, anyway. It's only about thutty foot further. Pick 'em up an' come along, Chick."

Mr. Chick sighed. He knew there was some flaw in Tumbleberry's reasoning — if it could be called reasoning — but he could not spot it at the moment; and they were losing time which might be spent in fishing, and which was, therefore, valuable. He sighed again, stopped and picked up the heavy basket, and pattered after Mr. Tumbleberry.

Mr. Tumbleberry was lowering himself gently and very deliberately upon the stringpiece when Mr. Chick arrived, breathless and perspiring.

"Y' be careful how y' put them clams down, Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry cautioned. "You don't want t' go a-heavin' of 'em overboard — any of 'em. I jest —"

Mr. Tumbleberry chanced to look at Mr. Chick at that moment, and his voice died away in vague rumblings. For Mr. Chick was glaring at Mr. Tumbleberry, and getting red in the face. He got redder and redder, and Mr. Tumbleberry smiled mildly, and addressed him in conciliatory tones.

"You 'havin' a rush o' blood t' th' head, ain't you, Chick? I would n't now, if I was you. Y' 'd ought t' keep a tight holt on y'r passions, f'r y' 're jest th' build t' go off with apoplexy, sudden. I should n't be surprised a mite if y' did, one o' these days. If y' was t' have a stroke right here, *I* should n't know how t' take care o' you. An' besides, y' 'd fall overboard, like as not, an' I can't swim any, not wuth mentionin'."

Mr. Chick muttered something about "carryin' them clams," but the red began to subside.

"Well," said Mr. Tumbleberry, after waiting an appreciable time for Chick to complete his remark, "you do as you like about carryin' of 'em. You can't carry 'em no further without heavin' of 'em overboard, an' I sh'd be jest as well satisfied t' have y' set 'em down right here behind th' stringpiece.

But if y' don't want to, don't. I guess I can make out to use what I want of 'em as the basket hangs there on y'r arm. Only, if y' set 'em down, I jest thought I 'd give y' a warnin' t' set 'em down gentle, 'cause I know how incautious you be in your movements sometimes. An' what they is left of 'em 's got t' go up t' Druce's."

Mr. Tumbleberry settled himself on the stringpiece, with his long legs dangling over the water, and rapidly and unerringly selected the better of the two fishlines. Then he turned and reached up to the basket; but Mr. Chick was in the act of settin' of 'em down behind the stringpiece, as Mr. Tumbleberry had suggested.

"That's right, Chick," Tumbleberry rumbled cheerfully. "Y' don't have no call t' get huffy. I was only sayin' what I was sayin' f'r y'r own good. If y' went an' hove 'em overboard, y' would n't have no fishin', an' y' 'd have t' procure two peck o' clams som'eres, an' lug 'em int' th' bargain. *And* a basket, Chick, you 'd have t' procure a basket. I could n't stand th' loss of a basket 's good 's that basket. Here 's your line, Chick."

As he spoke, Mr. Tumbleberry tossed the other line to Mr. Chick, who was engaged in seating himself upon the stringpiece at a convenient distance from the basket and from Mr. Tumbleberry. The line, reel and all, just missed going overboard.

"There, Tum," said Mr. Chick reproachfully, "see here. You a'most threw my line overboard."

"You always was lucky, Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry returned, smashing the clam held in the hollow of his hand. He smashed it upon the timber at his side, and the juice spurted over Mr. Chick. "If it had 'a' been me," Mr. Tumbleberry continued, taking no notice of the incident, "'t would 'a' been jest my luck t' have y' heave th' line right overboard int' th' water. But you always was lucky. If that line had 'a' gone int' th' water, y''d 'a' had t' give up on fishin'."

Red again suffused Mr. Chick's face.

"Well!" he began. "I'd jest like t' know—"

Mr. Tumbleberry had impaled a fragment of clam on each of his two hooks, and now he gave the line a skilful fling. It flew far out, sinker and hooks dropped into the water, and he pulled in the slack until he had the hooks suspended at the desired distance from the bottom.

"What was it 't y' wanted t' know?" he inquired. "If it's anything 't I can tell you, I'll do it cheerful'."

"Why would I 'a' had to give up on fishin'?" Mr. Chick burst forth. "Both lines 's mine. I'd like to see y' dispute that."

"Oh, I don't dispute it, Chick," said Mr. Tumbleberry mildly. "'T would n't be honest. But whose is the clams? They're mine, ain't they?"

"No, they ain't," Mr. Chick answered, dropping his own line into the water. "I figger 't them clams is Druce's."

Mr. Tumbleberry gave a fearful jerk to his line. "Consarn these little chogshead!" he observed. "But them clams, Chick, ain't Druce's till they're delivered 't Druce's. No, nor they ain't then; not till they're paid for. Ain't y' never bought anything on th' instalment plan?"

Mr. Chick admitted that he had — to his sorrow.

"I ain't," said Mr. Tumbleberry promptly, "an' I ain't a-goin' to."

Mr. Chick thought that this was very likely. Mr. Tumbleberry, when he bought anything, bought for cash. He had to.

"If y' have," Mr. Tumbleberry went on without stopping more than a few seconds, "y' know they 's a paper they make y' sign 't they call a lease. 'T ain't any more a lease 'n I be. It's jest t' make y' agree 't they have a right t' enter on y'r premises, Chick, without trespass — 'enter on the premises o' the party o' the second part without trespass' is what the paper says — an' take away anything they want, includin' th' thing y' bought, an' leave you in the hole. An' y' can't do anything t' th' man. If you hit him — which I would n't advise, Chick, you bein' built 's you be — it's a case of assault an' battery. So I figger 't them clams is mine, Chick, an' 't they stay mine till paid for in full. Th' title don't pass till payment is complete. An' I figger 't I got the right t' enter on Druce's premises without trespass, an' take away them clams — or what I c'n find of 'em."

"Guess you would n't find much," Mr. Chick remarked. "But I know where they throw the shells, Tum, if they 's any use t' you."

Mr. Tumbleberry took no notice of this suggestion. He gave his line another fearful jerk.

"I b'lieve I got somethin'," he said. "Guess I better look. These consarned chogshead steal y'r bait like th' Old Harry."

He drew in his line until the hooks were clear of the water. Mr. Chick leaned far over, until he seemed in danger of losing his balance.

"Don't y' lean no further, Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry cautioned, "or y''ll fall in. An' I warn you 't y''d stay in f'r all I c'd do. But I guess y' would n't sink. The tide 's runnin' out pretty fast, an' I don' know where y''d bring up. Y''d look like a feather piller floatin' down th' harbor, 's fur 's I c'd see, an' y''d go clean past the breakwater, like 's not, an' out into th' bay. I *have* got somethin', 'f y' want to know. It's a little chogshead, 'bout 's long 's my thumb. Ketched him b' th' tail."

Mr. Tumbleberry pulled in his line, covered the unfortunate little chogset with his hand, removed him from the hook as gently as might be, and tossed him into the basket, where he gave two or three feeble flaps and lay still.

"I 'd 'a' throwed him back 'f he had n't been good 's dead a'ready," Mr. Tumbleberry remarked apologetically. "But a fish 's a fish," he added, baiting his hooks again.

"An' ketched by the tail!" Mr. Chick ejaculated shrilly in excess of scorn. "I don't call that ketched at all — rightly. I've ketched 'em by the stummick, but —"

His eyes bulged, and he gave his line a jerk which was not such a jerk as Mr. Tumbleberry had given. Mr. Tumbleberry had longer arms.

"Jumpin' Jiminy!" said Mr. Chick.

"Le' 's see it, Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry urged. "Pull y'r line in, an' le' 's see it. Why'n't y' pull it in, Chick? Ain't you able? There! Be careful or y''ll have y'r line broke. Must be ketched on somethin'."

"Ketched on somethin'!" shouted Mr. Chick. His voice was higher than ever with excitement. "Sh'd think it was! Ketched on a fish, that's what!"

"Must be a whale," Mr. Tumbleberry remarked in his calm bass, "or stone jug 'r somethin'. Does it pull like a stone jug, Chick? I see a man pull up a stone jug t' this very stringpiece oncet. Ketched his hook in th' handle. Sh'd y' think it was ketched in th' handle, Chick?"

"'T ain't no stone jug, I tell you," Mr. Chick said emphatically, "nor no other kind of a jug. It's —"

"'T ain't a jag, is it, Chick?" Mr. Tumbleberry inquired solemnly. "Mebbe y' got y'r hook into a jag. I sh'd think likely, by y'r actions."

Mr. Chick, angered beyond speech, glared at Mr. Tumbleberry, easing up on his line for the purpose. He was unable to attend to both matters at once.

"There!" said Mr. Tumbleberry mildly. He had leaned over the water to observe Mr. Chick's line. "Now, Chick, 'f y' pull in gentle, y''ll fetch it. 'T was ketched on a spile or in a piece o' rockweed."

Accordingly Mr. Chick pulled in gently, the red dying out of his face, and drew up over the edge of the wharf a chogset. It was a little larger than the one landed by Mr. Tumbleberry, and was hooked through the gills.

"'T was ketched in a fish, sure enough, Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry rumbled gently. "If y' sh'd want to weigh that fish, y' c'd go up t' th' pavilion. 'T won't cost y' but a cent. I don' know but what that's th' first fish I ever see ketched b' th' gills, an' mebbe Elmer 'd weigh it f'r nothin'."

Mr. Chick made no reply. He was very much ashamed, and he baited his hooks afresh, and fished for some time in silence.

Mr. Tumbleberry noticed the silence. "What y' ruminatin' on, Chick?" he asked. "I should n't think that chogshead c'd weigh on y'r mind very heavy. Anybody might 'a' ketched him b' th' gills. I would n't let that trouble me."

"It don't," said Mr. Chick shortly. "There don't nothin' trouble me. I was only thinkin' about this here force o' gravity, an' wonderin' how y''d apply it to bo'ts. How would you, Tum? About their floatin', I mean."

"Well," Mr. Tumbleberry replied after a brief consideration, "if I had my way, 't would n't be

applied to 'em at all. If it was n't applied to 'em they would n't never sink. An' y' c'n see f'r yourself, Chick, how convenient 't would be t' have a bo't that would n't never sink. You would n't never have to calk 'em nor paint 'em. An' if they is a job 't I don't like," Mr. Tumbleberry added with emphasis, "it's th' job o' paintin' th' bottom of a bo't, layin' on y'r back an' swallerin' spatters o' paint."

Mr. Chick nodded. "How long since y' did a job o' paintin' a bo't, Tum?"

"A consid'rable time," Mr. Tumbleberry answered. "It's a consid'rable time. An' I figger it'll be a consid'rable time longer 'fore I do another."

Mr. Chick relapsed into silence. Chogset tugged at his hooks without attracting his attention. At last Mr. Tumbleberry could not forbear speaking of it.

"You're havin' consid'rable many bites, Chick," he remarked.

"I was thinkin', Tum," said Mr. Chick, waking up at last and giving his line a series of rapid jerks, "that if the force o' gravity wa' n't applied t' bo'ts to make 'em sink, they would n't be nothin' t' keep 'em in th' water neither. An' th' ballast would n't be no good. An' a breath o' wind 'd lay 'em flat. Would it or would n't it? What *would* they do, Tum?"

Mr. Tumbleberry looked at his friend in amazement.

"Why, Chick, don't you know about bo'ts?"

"'Course I know about bo'ts," Mr. Chick replied indignantly. "Ain't I growed up with 'em? I know what they *will* do, bein' *as* they be, but it's what they *would* do if — if — an' I don't see how y''d explain it, bein' *as* they be, by this 'ere force o' gravity, so 's t' make it plain, nor how y''d explain it, bein' as they *ain't*, with th' force o' gravity not applied to 'em."

"Well, y' think about it for a while," said Mr. Tumbleberry comfortingly, "an' it'll come t' you. See here, Chick, ain't they nothin' but these darn' little chogshead here? They ain't a fish more'n four inches long. Ain't they no tautaug here?"

"I see some tautaug ketched from th' bridge yestiddy," said Mr. Chick. "They was fairly good-sized too."

"Th' only trouble 'bout fishin' from th' bridge," said Mr. Tumbleberry, shifting his position a fraction of an inch while he renewed the bait upon his hooks, "is 't they ain't no place t' set down there. Y' have t' fish standin', an' it's harder f'r me to keep standin' up 'n it is f'r you, Chick. Y' stan' a hawgshead on end an' it'll stand f'rever without no trouble, but y' stan' a flagpole up, an' how long will it stand?"

The red again mantled Mr. Chick's cheek.

"I ain't no hawgshead, Tum," he said aggressively.

"Who said y' was?" rumbled Mr. Tumbleberry conciliatingly. "I would n't call y' names, Chick.

"I WAS THINKIN', TUM," SAID MR. CHICK, . . . "THAT IF THE FORCE O' GRAVITY WA'N'T APPLIED T' BO'TS"

I only said 't it was harder f'r me to keep standin' straight 'n what it is f'r you. That about th' hawgshead was nothin' but a sort o' samlee, so t' speak, t' make my meanin' clearer."

"Don't make it no clearer," Mr. Chick grumbled. "It's clear enough 'thout bringin' Chinamen into it."

"Well, Chick, I'll apologize 'f it'll make y' feel any better," said Mr. Tumbleberry. "But y' don't dispute th' fact 't it's harder f'r me 'n what it is f'r you, do you?"

"Mebbe 't is," Mr. Chick returned absently. "Mebbe 't is, Tum. It's harder f'r you t' do 'most everything, ain't it?"

CHAPTER II

Mr. Chick's gaze was fixed upon a small sloop which had just come to her mooring, and he was watching with a sort of fascination while her sails were being furled. Mr. Tumbleberry looked sharply at Mr. Chick, but he saw that Chick's mind was not on what he was saying.

"What is it, Chick?" he asked. "See a ghost? That ain't no ghost," he continued, following Mr. Chick's gaze. "It's only Bill Druce, been fishin', I think likely."

Mr. Chick sighed. "I know it. But he reminded me o' somethin' 't I'd clean forgot."

He began to pull in his line slowly.

"You goin' to stop fishin', Chick, or what is it?" Mr. Tumbleberry inquired. "I would n't stop yet. They's plenty o' bait, an' we ain't caught anythin' wuth mentionin'."

"I know it, Tum," replied Mr. Chick plaintively. "But I promised Mis' Druce 't I'd cut her grass fust thing this mornin', an' I've went an' clean forgot all about it."

"That's too bad," said Mr. Tumbleberry sympathetically. "That's too bad. You had n't ought to 've promised positive. *Did* you promise positive, Chick, or did y' leave you a sort o' loophole 't y' c'd crawl out of?"

"I don't rightly remember," Mr. Chick answered, shaking his head sadly. "I *meant* it positive. I guess I'll have t' go, Tum. There's Billy comin' in now."

"I see him," Mr. Tumbleberry returned. "He's rowin' harder'n they's any call for. Guess y''d better wait, Chick, till he's landed an' gone up. Y' could n't never keep up with him. An' he'd ask y' questions."

"Well, he'll ask me questions anyway," Mr. Chick retorted, "or 'Silly will. An' I'll have t' answer 'em if I know th' answer. They ain't no puttin' her off. She al'ays gets the whole story out o' me. If she's t' know 't I ever had anythin' t' do with them clams sh''d ask me all about 'em, an' how many I understood 't they was, an' what 'd become o' th' rest. An' I'd get so worked up an' nervous 't I'd be teeterin' back an' forth on m' feet. 'T ain't no use tryin' t' stop it. An' I'd end up by tellin' her. So," Mr. Chick concluded, shaking his head, "I'm glad I'm shet o' them clams."

"You al'ays was one t' talk a mite too much, Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry rumbled pleasantly. "What'd be th' sense o' tellin' 'Silly a long rigamarole about a basket o' clams? Y''d be a fool t' do it. Mind," he added hastily, for he saw the quick color mounting in Mr. Chick's cheeks, "I ain't callin' y' a fool. I'm only sayin' 't y' *would* be. Don't y' go an' git mad. Y''re awful quick-tempered, Chick."

Mr. Tumbleberry gave his line a long sweep upward.

"Thought I had 'im," he remarked, "but I ain't. If y' sh'd pull in y'r line, Chick, y' might find somethin', I should n't wonder a mite."

"I may be a fool," grumbled Mr. Chick, pulling in his line, which still hung in the water, "but I ain't a —"

"Y''ve got somethin', Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry interrupted, "but I would n't lean over 'f I was you. Y''ll see it 's soon 's y' git 'im to th' stringpiece. He's dead, I think likely. Looks 's if he'd been hangin' there a week."

In silence Mr. Chick drew up his line, and removed from the hook a chogset caught by the stomach.

"Must 'a' ketched 'im when y' started pullin' in a while ago," said Mr. Tumbleberry. "Ne' mind, Chick. You bait up ag'in, an' fish a while longer."

"Mebbe y''re right, Tum. Guess I won't go jest yet. Ten or fifteen minutes won't make no difference."

"Not a mite," Mr. Tumbleberry assented, with a sound like distant thunder. "Not a mite. P'r'aps y''d jest 's well throw y'r co't over that basket o' clams, Chick."

"My co't!" Mr. Chick exclaimed in amazement. "But I got it on, Tum."

"Well," Mr. Tumbleberry suggested calmly, "they ain't no law ag'inst y'r takin' of it off. It's too hot f'r y' t' be wearin' a co't, anyway. I guess y'r co't helped that rush o' blood t' th' head 't y' was havin' a while back. I see y'r face 's a-gittin' red

this minute, an' 'f y' was t' ask my advice, I sh'd say f'r y' to take y'r co't off an' lay it over that basket o' clams. It's different with me, or I'd lay my own over 'em."

Mr. Chick muttered something about not having asked Mr. Tumbleberry's advice; but he took off his coat and threw it over the clams.

"Jest han' me three or four o' them clams, Chick, 'fore y' cover 'em up f'r good," said Mr. Tumbleberry. "Why 'n't y' bait up ag'in? Ain't you a-goin' to, or what is it?"

Again Mr. Chick muttered darkly, but his line was in the water once more when Druce passed, a few feet away. Druce looked up pleasantly.

"Hello, Chick. Hello, Tum. Having any luck?"

"Hello, Bill!" Mr. Tumbleberry thundered in tones which could have been heard half a mile away. "No luck wuth mentionin'." And he reached into the basket, under Chick's coat, and held up a little fish.

Billy Druce laughed. "Too bad! Plenty of fish down below. I'll take you two down some day soon."

Mr. Tumbleberry and Mr. Chick had already seen the glistening heap in the bottom of his boat, and it excited their envy. The boat disappeared around the corner of the wharf.

"Thank y', Bill," Mr. Tumbleberry roared after the vanishing boat. "Me an' Chick 'll be glad t' come."

Mr. Tumbleberry was looking up the wharf when Druce landed and walked quickly away. He continued to watch for a few moments.

"'T was jest 's well," he observed, turning to his fishing, "'t he did n't take a notion t' come down here. What is it 't you're a-doin', Chick?"

Mr. Chick was pulling in his line. He sighed.

"'S no use, Tum. I 'got t' go. I don't have no peace," he added plaintively, "thinkin' about that grass."

"Well, Chick," said Mr. Tumbleberry, "if it's y'r conscience 't 's troublin' you, I won't keep you."

Mr. Chick made no reply, but reeled in his line, and took his coat from the basket of clams.

"I'll keep th' lines, Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry continued, "an' another han'ful o' clams 'f y''ll jest han' 'em over. 'S long 's y''re goin' up t' Druce's, I don' know but what y' might 's well take along that basket o' clams. Jest leave it there. They c'n pay me some other time, an' send me back th' basket."

Mr. Chick sputtered and got red in the face and gesticulated; he opened his mouth to speak, but no intelligible sounds issued from it. He glared at Mr. Tumbleberry, but the glare fell harmlessly upon the back of that gentleman's coat, for he was absorbed in his fishing. He glared fiercely at the clams. Then, suddenly he stooped and picked up the basket, and he walked up the wharf with rather more violence than there was any real need for. Occasionally, as

he walked, he made a savage gesture with his free arm, and he muttered now and then.

As he reached the turn at the head of the wharf, he saw Mr. Tumbleberry sitting peacefully on the stringpiece, looking out over the quiet water and fishing comfortably. At the sight, Mr. Chick smiled in spite of himself, and his countenance began to regain its normal color. The Druce house was in sight from the head of the wharf, and by the time he had reached the high wall which shut off the Druce barn, Mr. Chick's face wore a look of deep serenity. His hat, bobbing as he walked, was just visible above the wall at every step.

He heard voices, and a clear young laugh. The look of serenity vanished instantly, and a look of embarrassment and alarm took its place. It was Drusilla Druce. He stopped, meditating flight.

"Look, Billy," Mr. Chick heard that young person say, "it's Chick. There's his hat."

It was too late for flight. Mr. Chick resumed his course, no longer so tranquil, opened the gate and went forward. There were Billy Druce and his sister, the pile of fish on the ground between them. Chick set his basket on the ground without speaking.

"What 'you got there, Chick?" Billy asked. "Are they ours?"

"Tum told me t' bring 'em up. He said t' leave 'em an' say nothin', an' so I do."

Drusilla laughed, and Mr. Chick started guiltily.

"I hope that gits me rid of 'em," he said malevo-

lently, recovering an appearance of composure. "I've had them clams saddled onto me half th' mornin'."

"Tum's always imposing on you, Chick."

"Well," said Mr. Chick, feeling that he ought to offer some apology in behalf of an absent friend, "Tum's so everlastin' tall an' slim 't sometimes it seems 's if it took more stren'th 'n he c'd muster t' hold jest *himself* up, t' say nothin' o' two peck o' clams an' a basket. That's th' way it 's been this mornin'."

"It's hard work, Chick," Billy observed, "to get the better of the force of gravity."

"Tum can't never do it," Mr. Chick replied. "Say, Billy, I 'been wonderin' — c'd you tell me somethin' about the force o' gravity?"

"I won't promise. What is it?"

"It's about bo'ts floatin'," Mr. Chick said earnestly. "How 'd you explain it?"

"Why, yes," said Billy. "They're lighter — er — than —" he hesitated, then stopped. "I'm ashamed to say that I can't do it right off the bat. I should have to think about it, or look it up, to explain it the way you've been tackling the force of gravity. I'll do it if you like."

"Did n't they teach y' that, t' college, Billy? I thought mebbe they did."

"Perhaps, but I forget. I'm all through college."

"I know y' be, Billy," said Chick in admiration.

"Me an' Tum have follered y'r career close. But," he added, "I don't see how y' c'd go an' *forget* an interestin' thing like that, an' you all up on bo'ts an' managin' 'em an' all. I'll bet *I* would n't 'a' forgot that 'f anybody'd ever 'a' taught it t' me so's I knew it." There was no hint of reproach in Mr. Chick's voice. "Now I understand why things is jest plain heavy, like them clams, but when y' come to bo'ts floatin', why," — and Mr. Chick shook his head in despair — "it gits *me*."

"You ought to have gone to college yourself, Chick."

"Sho!" said Mr. Chick, much pleased, but with a deprecating smile, "I could n't 'a' got nothin' out of it, 't ain't likely."

Drusilla had been regarding the clams while Mr. Chick made his futile attempt at acquiring scientific information.

"You said," she remarked firmly, fixing the instantly unhappy Mr. Chick with an accusing eye, "that there are two pecks —"

"Did n't say nothin' o' the sort," Mr. Chick broke in hastily, seeing his worst fears about to be realized. "I would n't take th' responsibility o' sayin' anythin' about 'em. They ain't my clams, an' they never was."

"Chick!" said Drusilla reproachfully.

Mr. Chick began to teeter back and forth, first on one foot, then on the other, in very evident perturbation. "Well, 'Silly, I would n't guarantee 't they's

two peck. I did n't see 'em measured. May be two bushel f'r all I know."

Drusilla was not to be trifled with.

"Please put your mind on it," she said, "and give us the benefit of your opinion."

"My opinion o' what, 'Silly?"

"Of the clams, of course."

"Well, 'Silly," Mr. Chick replied slowly, teetering more violently than ever, "I have n't et any of 'em, but I sh'd say they was likely t' eat good 'f they's steamed right. That is, 'f y' figger on steamin' 'em," he murmured.

Drusilla stamped her foot. "Do stop acting like a rocking-horse. Now tell —"

"I can't help it, 'Silly," Mr. Chick interrupted plaintively. "Y' al'ays put me out so! I told Tum y' would."

"Tell me," Drusilla said firmly, "how many clams you understand there were. No more trifling!"

Again Mr. Chick began violent teetering. "I understood 't they was two peck, 'Silly, but I don't *know* nothin' about 'em."

"Then you would say that there are two pecks?"

"I sh'd say," Mr. Chick began, "I sh'd say 't they was two peck — mebbe lackin' a few — mebbe lackin' a few."

"Lacking a few?" Drusilla pursued her inquisition heartlessly. "Lacking how many, Chick?"

The words were reluctantly dragged from the unhappy Mr. Chick.

"Lackin' mebbe a dozen. I sh'd say, 'f I was put to it, 't they was two peck lackin' mebbe a dozen. I sh'd n't think 't was more 'n a dozen."

"What became of that dozen, Chick?"

"I sh'd say," Mr. Chick answered slowly, "'t they was dropped overboard — 'f I was put to it."

"Dropped overboard!" Drusilla cried. "Why?"

"I sh'd say," Chick went on, "'t they was lost overboard — off the end of th' wharf into th' harbor."

"Don't you worry, Chick," said Billy Druce, "about the clams."

"I ain't a-worryin'," Mr. Chick returned promptly. "They ain't my clams an' they never was, an' I've done my full duty by 'em." Drusilla was laughing, and Mr. Chick once more at peace with the world. "Say, Billy," he said, "don't y' want I sh'd clean that mess o' fish f'r you? I'd be glad t' do it. 'T won't take but a few minutes, an' th' grass c'n wait that long."

CHAPTER III

MEANWHILE Mr. Tumbleberry continued his fishing contentedly. He was not so happy as Mr. Chick might have been, but on the other hand he was not unhappy, and Mr. Chick might easily have been that. Tumbleberry was not so emotional as Mr. Chick, and was chronically in expectation of the worst. He was rarely disappointed.

Mr. Tumbleberry had not taken very many clams when Chick walked off with the basket. He wished he had taken more. Chogset are accomplished bait-stealers, and they had stolen most of his, although two more little fish had flapped their last. He held his last clam in the hollow of his hand, and regarded it with sadness.

"Wish 't I had 'a' took more while I had th' chancet," he murmured. "Chick 's al'ays a-goin' an' sp'ilin' sport, takin' away a man's clams an' one thing 'r another. Might 'a' had a couple o' hours good fishin', even 'f there ain't nothin' here but these little shrimps. 'Would n't nobody ever 'a' missed a few clams." He sighed. "Well," he said, "'t ain't doin' me no good 'nless I use it." And he smashed the clam on the stringpiece, divided it with his fingers into pieces of appropriate size, and baited his hooks. Then he cast them out into the water, and lapsed into immobility and silence.

There was a soft sound behind him, as if the wind had stirred one of the old chips of wood scattered over the surface of the wharf. Mr. Tumbleberry looked around, and then quickly, with a single motion of his hand, he swept the fresh pieces of clamshell from the top of the stringpiece into the water. With the pieces of shell went the last piece of clam. Mr. Tumbleberry was conscious of the feeling of softness against his finger, and looked down.

"Sho!" he muttered. "Ain't that too bad! Jest my luck. That *con*sarned Joshuway Ridin' has t' come an' spile it all." He turned. "'Mornin', Joshuway," he thundered heartily, "that is, 'f it's still mornin'. My watch 's run down."

Joshua Riding ambled noiselessly on for a few steps, and stopped just out of reach of Mr. Tumbleberry. It would have been hard to make a good guess at his age, but nobody was at all interested in anything which concerned Joshua Riding. He wore an old felt hat, and a suit which was a little too big for him; and both suit and hat were of a nondescript color, and they shone with the accumulation of grease and sweat and dirt of all kinds. His long brown beard, hanging in ringlets, his face and hands, all looked as if they had not been washed since the beginning of history. His rubber boots were a little too big for him, and on one arm hung a muddy basket covered with an old piece of oilcloth. He did not speak.

"Well, Joshuway," bellowed Mr. Tumbleberry

with a slight show of impatience, "why 'n't you tell me what time it is?"

Joshua pulled out an old gold watch. "It's between eleven and twelve, Tumbleberry," he said in a voice husky with disuse. "I can't tell you exactly."

"She don't run very exact, Joshuway," observed Mr. Tumbleberry. "I c'd make out t' guess 's clost 's that. 'Been clammin', I think likely. Tide 's little more 'n half out. 'You go clammin' at high tide, Joshuway?"

Joshua made no reply.

"'F y' got any clams in that basket," Mr. Tumbleberry continued, "y' might han' me a few. I ain't got any bait, an' I'm fishin'."

To this also Joshua made no reply, nor did he make any motion to comply with Mr. Tumbleberry's demand.

"I ain't got no prej'dice ag'inst broken shells," Mr. Tumbleberry rumbled cheerfully after a short silence. "It'll save me th' trouble o' breakin' 'em, an' th' fish won't know no difference."

Even this hint had no effect upon Joshua. He might have been incapable of speech or motion. Mr. Tumbleberry fished silently.

"Well, Joshuway," he said at last, "you got 'em all beat a mile when it comes t' keepin' still. 'Can't nobody tech y' at it. *Have* you got any clams in that basket, or ain't you?"

Although he did not answer Mr. Tumbleberry's

question, Joshua broke his silence. It seemed to hurt him to have to do it.

"Those two pecks of clams I let you have this morning, Tumbleberry," he said in his gentle, husky voice, "do you want to pay me for them now?"

This matter demanded Mr. Tumbleberry's attention. He screwed around until he could see Joshua without turning his head, while he worked his line slowly up and down with one hand.

"'S fur's that goes," he began, in tones which rumbled and echoed like a wagonload of cobblestones, "'t ain't a question o' wantin' t' pay f'r 'em now, but whether I'd ought ter. 'T don't make no difference, 's fur's I c'n see, whether I want to 'r not, an' 't 's a fact, Joshuway, 't it don't make no difference. Not a mite. When we completed that transaction this mornin', Joshuway, them clams was merchandise. Now, wa' n't they?"

Joshua regarded Mr. Tumbleberry in silence, and without the movement of a muscle.

"You 'llow 't they was," said Mr. Tumbleberry. "Well, then. They was sold or transferred to me on credit. Now, wa' n't they? And at your price."

By a sad inclination of his head Joshua acknowledged that they were so sold, but that he should have known better.

"Well, then," said Mr. Tumbleberry in impressive tones worthy of the Supreme Court. "So fur so good. It's th' custom t' render bills — render's the word 't they use, Joshuway, but it means th' same

's send — to render bills coverin' th' transactions 'f th' month jest past. An' it's understood, 'f it ain't stated on the bill, that th' terms is thutty days net, 'r a discount f'r cash. All th' bills I ever see was that way. So the reg'lar way's f'r you t' make me out a bill, an' send it along th' fust o' next month, sayin' th' terms is thutty days net. I sh'll aim t' pay it 'thin th' thutty days. But, 'f I should n't, when th' time's up you got th' right t' net f'r th' money. You c'd use a dip net 'r a purse seine 'r a fish trap t' ketch it. It'd be all th' same t' me. 'N' I guess one 'd be 's good 's another," Mr. Tumbleberry concluded. He turned to his line. "I got a fish, I should n't wonder a mite, Joshuway."

He began to haul in his line, but Joshua had turned silently, and was scuffling away.

"Hol' on there, Joshuway!" Mr. Tumbleberry called after him. It could have been heard almost at the other end of the village. "Don't y' go off mad. I got somethin' more t' say 't 'll set better on y'r mind." Joshua stopped and turned his head, but did not come back.

Mr. Tumbleberry lowered his voice. "Them clams," he said; "I jest sent Chick up t' Druce's with 'em mebbe half an hour ago. I ain't been paid f'r 'em yet. I ain't got any money in these clo'es. Soon's ever I git paid I'll pay you, but y' better make out t' see me pretty soon after, 'r it might go f'r one thing 'r another."

Joshua was scuffling up the wharf, and Mr. Tum-

bleberry gave his undivided attention to a small chogset which flapped vigorously on the stringpiece. It was removed from the hook, and Mr. Tumbleberry regarded his catch contemplatively.

"I ain't got any more bait," he murmured, "owin' t' that consarned Joshuway. I might cut up that little feller." He looked about for a piece of clamshell, but every fragment had been swept into the water by his own hand. His eye roved over farther reaches of the wharf where there might be a piece or two, and he considered. "Have t' git up t' git 'em," he said, "an' then set down ag'in. 'S jest 's well. Prob'ly would n't ketch nothin'. Chogshead ain't sech good bait, anyway. An' one chogshead behind th' stringpiece's wuth a dozen down amongst th' spiles."

So he sat very contentedly, fishing with a bare hook. As he thought, "'t don't do t' let a chancet git by," and he did actually have two or three faint nibbles, as though some chogset had made a dab at the hook in passing. He seldom caught them by the mouth, anyway. But he did not have luck this time, and the nibbles at the bare hook soon ceased. He sat there for a long time without motion, his line hanging useless. Then he sighed and stirred.

"'Must be long after twelve," he muttered, "'f feelin''s any sign."

He pulled in his line slowly, tossed it into the basket — Mr. Chick's basket and lines — and picked up eight diminutive chogset, tossing them into the

basket on top of the lines. Then, with another sigh, he uncoiled himself, got to his feet, stooped for the basket, and set out up the wharf. He stopped at the pavilion.

"Hello, Elmer!" he thundered to the young man pleasantly musing, his feet up and a cigar in his mouth. "I'll jest leave Chick's basket 'n' lines f'r him t' git. Jest han' me a piece o' paper 'fore I let 'em go f'r good."

Elmer reached down, without moving his feet from their elevated position of comfort, and passed out a torn piece of wrapping paper. "'That do, Tum?"

Mr. Tumbleberry took the piece of wrapping paper.

"Ain't you got an ol' newspaper, Elmer?"

Elmer fished an old newspaper from a repository under the counter, and passed it out.

"Much obliged, Elmer," Mr. Tumbleberry rumbled heartily. "Fine! 'T ain't to-day's paper, is it? Mebbe it's old enough so's I've forgot th' news in it. 'T'd be all th' same. 'F y' want we should, Chick an' me'll clear out that ol' mess o' stuff f'r you. Won't charge y' much." Elmer shook his head. "Sh'd think y' would. Jedgin' by th' date on this paper, 't's been 'cumulatin' f'r six months, but it's all th' same t' me 'f y' want th' Improvement S'ciety t' git after you."

Elmer made no response. Mr. Tumbleberry had been extracting the chogset from the basket and

wrapping them in the folds of paper. He now cast Mr. Chick's basket over the counter, and stuffed the bulky bundle into his pocket.

"Any time y' see Chick," said Mr. Tumbleberry carelessly, "y' might's well let him take along them lines an' his basket. He might want 'em."

As Mr. Tumbleberry went down the steps his specious cheerfulness and heartiness fell from him, and dejection enveloped him. His dejection lasted until he reached a path, farther up the shore; for he met nobody. The path ran deviously beside a little garden belonging to the little old square house which stood beside it. Mr. Tumbleberry turned into the path, followed all its windings to the corner of the fence, very near the tide mark, then turned along the shore. The course of the path could still be seen, although it was less marked because of the character of the ground: chiefly sand or sandy earth, covered with seaweed which seemed to have accumulated for years, with an occasional patch of wild peas or wiry grass or beach weeds. Forty or fifty feet farther on, a few feet above the line of seaweed, stood what Mr. Tumbleberry dignified by the name of a house. It was a very small house, much like a good-sized bathhouse or a hen-house, or it might have been originally a fish-house; its outward appearance respectable enough, the shingles on roof and sides not very bad. It could not contain more than one room, and that room evidently contained a stove, for its sheet-iron pipe projected through the roof. When Mr.

Tumbleberry was compelled to speak at all of this house, he referred to it as his house, though how it had become his nobody seemed to remember; possibly, the actual owner having disappeared or abandoned it, Mr. Tumbleberry's rights were those of a squatter. At all events, nobody thought it worth while to dispute them.

Mr. Tumbleberry made his way slowly over the seaweed, his eyes on the ground. Three or four times in the course of his walk he stooped and picked up a stick or a sliver of driftwood, and tucked it under his arm. When he reached his front door he stooped and, reaching down to one of the piles on which the house was built, he drew forth a great copper key fully seven inches long. This he inserted into an enormous iron padlock, turned it, removed the padlock and opened the door.

Mr. Chick had not been to Mr. Tumbleberry's abode for a long time, because, if the truth must be told, of a natural shyness and delicacy about Tumbleberry's feelings. It may seem strange to impute motives of the sort to Chick, who was not aware of his motives. He knew only that it distressed him beyond measure to see the inside of Tumbleberry's house, and something kept him from saying anything of his distress to Tum, who knew, therefore, nothing about it. For a long time, too, Mr. Chick had not asked Mr. Tumbleberry to his own abode for similar reasons. Besides, Mr. Chick boarded.

If Mr. Chick had been present when Tumble-

berry opened his door on this occasion, he would have been distressed more than ever. The first thing that would have struck him was the air. It was just plain bad, and it had a musty, mouldy smell — and other smells. If Mr. Chick had been present, it would have struck him that this was the very same air which he had unwillingly sniffed on the occasion of his last visit, three years before, only more so. Oh, infinitely more so! If he could only tell Tum about it without giving offence!

The next thing that would have struck him was the pile of bedclothes on the bed in the corner. Owing to Mr. Tumbleberry's financial condition or to his lack of it, and owing, too, to the fact that even poor bedclothes of every station have a price, these bedclothes of Mr. Tumbleberry's had been reduced to a condition of unbelievable raggedness. Also, Mr. Tumbleberry, having nobody to do his washing for him, had to do it himself; and it is hard work to wash things like these when the work has to be done on the shore at night, and in salt water without suitable soap, or with no soap at all. Consequently or not, Mr. Tumbleberry was finding himself more and more disinclined to the labor, which he therefore accomplished only when it seemed to him to be absolutely unavoidable.

On the other side of the door was a small camp stove in better condition than would have been expected. Mr. Tumbleberry gave it a rub now and then, realizing that its continued usefulness was es-

sential to his well-being. He even went so far as to attempt to polish it, using stove-polish when he had it, and on other occasions using any kind of grease which was at hand. There were two or three pans lying beside the stove, a small pile of driftwood, and a rocking-chair from which the original seat was gone, but pretty good on the whole. It is astonishing what good things people will throw away: pans, if one knows where to look, practically as good as a new one for cooking, and the rocker. It was a matter of a little old rope and half an hour's time, and Mr. Tumbleberry had a rocking-chair more comfortable than it had ever been before in its life. In addition Mr. Tumbleberry had a packing-case — not a very big one — turned upon its side. The side furnished a table good enough for anybody, and the inside served as a competent closet, good for anything. This completed the furnishing; indeed, it was almost too much, the room looked crowded. There was not room to move anything out of its place, but Mr. Tumbleberry did not want to move anything out of its place. He was well enough satisfied with it as it was — in summer; during the winters it left something to be desired.

Mr. Tumbleberry shut the door carefully, and let himself down into the rocker with equal care. Now he was "all set," as he would say, and it was a great comfort to know that he could reach anything in the room without getting up, while perhaps gently rocking. His few sticks of driftwood had been cast

upon the pile by the stove. He sighed, then drew from his pocket the bulky package of papers and chogset, unrolled it, and looked over the newspaper with some care. Selecting a page of advertising of no interest to him, he stuffed it into the stove with some dry driftwood, and drew from his closet an old tobacco tin, which should contain matches. It did — two. Mr. Tumbleberry gazed at them in mild surprise.

"I ain't got but two!" he muttered. "I'll have t' make out t' git me some more, somehow 'r another."

He succeeded in lighting his fire with one match, with some nursing. During the course of this proceeding he assumed the attitude most naturally assumed by a long-legged man in a rocking-chair, when the things with which he is busied are not far from the floor and he is preoccupied. In this situation the rocking-chair suddenly took matters into its own hands, or arms, refused to go farther, and Mr. Tumbleberry found himself sitting upon the floor, with the back of the chair resting upon his head. Mr. Tumbleberry was not disconcerted.

"Well," he said deliberately, "jest as you like. Have it y'r own way. I guess I c'n make out t' finish th' job a-settin' where I be."

The fire kindled, Mr. Tumbleberry looked up triumphantly. "There you be!" he said. "Now I got a match left." Then he sighed. He had to get up, and he struggled to his feet, setting the rocking-

chair upright at the same time. He sat down and searched in his closet until he found an old piece of tin — the back of an old tobacco-box — with which he proceeded to scale the chogset with a dexterity which showed long familiarity with the implement. He pulled out the fins by the roots and split the fish with the same implement, and cut off the heads and tails. The resultant pieces of fish were very small, but they were delicate and appetizing.

Mr. Tumbleberry sat back with a sigh of relief and rocked gently for perhaps a minute, and watched his fire. It was roaring finely. He placed a small frying-pan on the stove. The pan had a hole in it, to be sure, but it was not a large hole, and nothing would leak out of it. There was never enough grease in Mr. Tumbleberry's frying-pan to leak out, and he never used butter for frying for several reasons — although the first reason was enough.

As very nearly everything that Mr. Tumbleberry owned was contained in the dry goods box — his closet — he now proceeded to search once more, and in a few motions of his hand unearthed another tobacco-box. Empty tobacco-tins are easily come by, and most convenient. This one contained a small quantity of grease, but of what kind Mr. Tumbleberry could not have told you. He quickly wiped around with a fragment of paper and smeared it on the hot frying-pan, which instantly gave forth a dense smoke and an odor which Mr. Tumbleberry seemed to consider fragrant and rich. He then put

in the pieces of fish, pressing each piece down on the pan, briefly, with his fingers. The pan, small as it was, easily held them all. Then he sighed with comfort, unfolded the paper in which the chogset had been wrapped, leaned back, and began to rock gently and to read. He did not watch the fish. He did not need to. The smell would tell him all he needed to know. Why else were human beings endowed with a sense of smell?

The pieces of fish were turned accurately with the piece of tin with which they had been scaled and deprived of their heads and tails, and eventually they were done. The fire was dying down now, and leaving the pan on the stove to keep hot, Mr. Tumbleberry ate the fish, one piece at a time, deliberately, taking it from the pan with his fingers and holding it while he munched and read. Why he did not burn his fingers to a crisp in the process I do not know, but the matter did not seem to give him any concern. The fish was finished, and his appetite somewhat dulled if not satisfied, but Mr. Tumbleberry read on, and rocked. He was not a rapid reader. It took him nearly two hours to get through that ancient paper. Then he crumpled it up, wiped his hands upon it, and promptly went to sleep.

An hour later he woke, stretched, and after a few minutes spent in meditation which may have been pleasant, he got up. It was time for him to be about his affairs. He did not put his hat on, for he had not taken it off; without further preparation he went

out, fitted the enormous padlock to its place and put the key behind the post. Then he gave an unconscious tug to the brim of his hat, and set off. He rather hoped he should not meet anybody, for he was bound for the lower beach, and upon his own business. It was a little later than he had meant to go, but the tide could not have been running in for much more than an hour. There was no telling what it might have done for him.

CHAPTER IV

THE Druce house was not far from the wharf, only just up the hill beyond two fields. It was a large, old-fashioned, squarish kind of a house, with a hip roof and dormer windows. With a considerable ell behind it to contain the kitchen and its appurtenances, and with its barn attached to the rear of the ell by a long, open shed facing the sun, it looked not unlike a little village in itself. It might be called, with propriety, the Druce homestead. That is what it was.

In front of the house, which faced nearly southwest, was a high fence of round, white wooden pickets, cut in long scallops between tall posts, each of which was surmounted by an urn. These urns, as well as the pickets, had long ago lost their dazzling whiteness, and had turned a nondescript dark color, or a deep green in the shadiest spots. The gateway was deeply recessed, and the gateposts bore larger urns. A massive stone wall joined the fence, and extended around the lot of nearly three acres. Behind the fence was an old and somewhat ragged hedge between the elms, and there were clumps of lilacs at the corners of the house, as high as the second story windows. Before the fence lay the road, and beyond the road the two meadows; and beyond these again, the harbor. Altogether, the Druce house had a comfortable, ancient air. It seemed to

have struck its roots deep into the earth, serene and peaceful, as though it had grown there.

The barn had fulfilled its purpose long ago. Now it sheltered no horses nor cows, which it had done for a century after it was built. During the winters two row-boats occupied the carriage-room, which had become a sort of carpenter-shop and boat-shop. All kinds of tools hung about the walls, and in the summer just within the opening of the wide doors was an excellent, comfortable place to clean fish. Billy Druce found it so, and here he was this morning, just finishing a mess of them.

A shadow suddenly appeared in the doorway, and Billy looked up. There was Drusilla.

"Billy," she began, and caught sight of the shining heap. "Oh!" she cried, forgetting what she had started to say. "How nice! Where did you get them? Bartley's?"

"Bartley's," Billy answered, meaning Bartley's Ledge. "Can always get fish there if you go early enough. Most done. I wish Chick had happened to come. I might have been persuaded to let him have this job."

"As you did the last time," said Drusilla. "He did n't mind."

"Liked it," said Billy briefly. "If he does come, Dru, give him some. There's more than we can use, and grandmother."

"Can I do anything to help?" asked Drusilla.

Billy shook his head, and she stood watching him,

as he skilfully and rapidly scaled, split, and boned the fish, pulling the fins out by the roots. He always did that instead of cutting the fins off. He contended that it took no longer to take the after end of a fin between the edge of the knife and his thumb and rip it out with a quick jerk. It was mostly knack. Anybody could do it, and he hated to get a mouthful of fin bones. There came a distant call for Drusilla.

"Oh, there!" that young person exclaimed. "I forgot what I came out for. Jean's in the house, Billy. I was to tell you."

"Thanks," he said, laughing. "She did n't come to see me."

"I'm not so sure. You'd better come in."

"Well, in a minute. You run along."

Meanwhile Mrs. Druce and Jean had been sitting in the great living-room which stretched across the whole south end of the house. Jean sat quietly by an open window at the front. She had been sitting in the same place and in the same position for some time. From time to time she looked out at the front gate, under the elms. Her glance rested there for a moment; then it travelled on past a yew tree that stood on the edge of the field across the road, across the fields to the harbor, across the harbor to the opposite shore, over pastures to the scattered houses beyond, and to the woods and distant blue hills which served for a horizon. From this window she had seen Will Druce come in at the gate some

time before. Sitting there, she could not very well help it. Of course she knew what view was to be had from that window, for she had sat there many times. Those front windows command a fine view of the sunset, and the sunsets were apt to be fine. It was nowhere near sunset.

Mrs. Druce was getting impatient, but Jean sat quietly, with her hands in her lap. They had not been talking much. They did not need to.

"I don't know what can have happened to Dru," Mrs. Druce remarked at last. "I can guess. Suppose we go out."

Jean Killian smiled quietly. She did everything quietly and very well, even to such an apparently trivial matter as smiling. She was not a pretty girl. There was nothing lovely about her as there was about Drusilla; nothing lovely except her slender, straight body, and her capable-looking hands, — perfect of their kind, — and the set of her head. To a stranger her face would have seemed lacking in beauty — plain, to put it plainly — until he had seen her smile. Then he might have thought that his hasty opinion would need revision when he knew her better.

She rose and followed Mrs. Druce out upon the piazza, and shut the screen door gently.

"Shall I go and see, Mrs. Druce?"

"I'll call first." And Mrs. Druce called in a clear, low-pitched voice. "If that does n't bring her, Jean. But I think I hear symptoms of her coming."

It was a minute or two before Drusilla came running.

"Oh, here you are!" she said. "I'm sorry, mother, but Billy had a lot of nice fish, and I forgot what I went for. Billy's coming right along. He was all covered with fish."

Again silence enveloped them. Jean was most evidently waiting for Will, Mrs. Druce was quietly amused, and presently Drusilla giggled. Nobody took any notice of it except for a reproving look from Mrs. Druce. Then they heard a firm step, Jean began to smile, and Billy appeared.

"Good-morning, mother. Good-morning, Jean."

They were both smiling as if the sun had just risen. "You made an early start, Billy," said his mother. "Did you have a good sail?"

"Fine. And the fishing was very good."

"Dru told us, and I have no doubt you had been seen with your string."

"Yes," said Jean brazenly. "I saw you come in, Will. I'm glad you had good luck. Did you have as good luck in Boston yesterday with your fishing?"

"For a job?" asked Billy. "I hardly know yet."

"But you got on the track of one? You saw somebody?" Jean persisted. "Tell me, Will. I came over on purpose to find out. So you may as well tell me. There is no escape, you see."

Billy laughed. "Well, then, Jean, here goes. I saw a good many people. I was just about as welcome as a book agent or a beggar, and there was

nothing doing. I had a pleasant morning, and, in fact, a good time was had by all. Then I went to lunch. Do you care for an account of my lunch — all the sordid details?" Jean was rather red. "I thought not. Well, in the afternoon I struck the trail of a job. Man named Veach. I seemed to hit him favorably, and I felt less like a beggar or a life-insurance agent. He made me an offer. I was dumb with astonishment. He mistook the paralysis of my vocal cords for hesitation, and told me to think it over for a few days. You now behold me giving the matter my serious personal consideration."

Jean laughed. "Deciding whether Mr. Druce will accept the position with Mr. Veach." She would not pursue her inquiries further. It would be useless. "Let me know what your decision is."

Jean was twenty, and she had managed her father's house for four years, and she was apt to try, without being aware of it, to manage the affairs of other people. Generally she knew it afterwards, when she thought of it at all. She knew it now, noting Mrs. Druce's silence, and her set smile. She flushed quickly.

"I beg your pardon," she said in a low voice. "I am always meddling. But I did hope, Will, that you would not be going away for good. Dru will be away at school again, and — and I suppose I was selfish." As she finished she got redder than ever.

"Why, Jean!" Mrs. Druce exclaimed. "I thought you were going to college."

Jean shook her head.

"What's the matter with it?" Billy demanded.

Jean smiled quickly.

"There's nothing the matter with it, Will," she said. "I did n't see how father could manage without me, that's all."

"Oh," Billy murmured, "that's it. It's too bad."

"I can keep up my studies by myself," Jean said, looking down, "and perhaps I can go next year." Then she looked up, and her expression changed quickly. "There's Madame Wadham."

Jean had risen as she spoke, and was already down the piazza steps.

Drusilla laughed. "Jean always sees grandmother before anybody else does," she remarked.

"Yes, dear," her mother said quietly. "It's nice of Jean."

"Oh, yes, of course it is," Drusilla returned lightly. "I did n't mean to imply that it was n't. But it makes me mad sometimes just the same."

A tall old woman was just closing the gate. She carried a tall walking-stick, which she did not seem to need, for her step was firm and decided as she turned to greet Jean and to smile at the others.

"I'm glad to see you, my dear," she said to Jean, with a gentle pat on the shoulder. Then she looked up again. "William and Drusilla, where are you? Come and help your poor old grandmother."

William and Drusilla laughed and went. "A lot of help you need, grandmother!" William observed.

"You're fit for the first string football squad this minute."

"I'm not on the first string squad, as it happens," Madame Wadham returned, "whatever that may be. Come here, Drusilla, my dear."

She kissed Drusilla affectionately. "You've been growing over night, child! When are you going to stop?"

"I'm not as tall as you," said Drusilla; "not yet."

"Well, if you have patience, you will be, and you will not need to have much patience either. Oh, good-morning, Chick." For they had chanced to come upon the breathless Mr. Chick, who touched his cap, and mumbled something and smiled as if all his movements had been directed to the end of bringing about that very chance.

Madame Wadham's stick tapped decidedly upon the gravelled walk, and upon the piazza steps, and upon the piazza floor. She sat down in a rocker — in which she did not rock — and leaned her stick against the house, within reach of her hand.

"Well, Cynthia," she began, "has anything happened since yesterday?"

Mrs. Druce smiled. "Nothing in particular," she replied. "But nothing ever does happen."

"Be thankful for that," Madame Wadham returned quickly. "There is so much more room for bad happenings than good. The less there is that happens the happier people are. Now, nothing ever

happens to me, and I'm as happy as a clam — and about as travelled," she added, "of late years."

"Surely you would n't want to travel, mother," Mrs. Druce protested, "at your age."

"Why not, at my age as well as another? I do not find that the desire is less as I grow older. I miss it. But I'm not going to, so you may make your mind easy. What is this that I hear about William?"

"Will," Mrs. Druce answered, "has been looking for work in Boston."

"So I heard. Has he found it?"

"A chance was offered him, and he is thinking about it. I know practically nothing about it."

"Why in the world does n't he let his father help him? There's nothing gained by passing up — is that the correct expression, Will? — your chances. But as he has not seemed to have any desire for my opinion I will not express any. A headstrong boy, Cynthia." She smiled fondly at Billy. "And I think the more of him for it," she added.

There was no reply, and Madame Wadham looked over the lawn into the orchard beyond. Mr. Chick labored into her field of view, and labored out again. Jean rose, saying briefly that she must go, and bade good-bye to Madame Wadham and to Mrs. Druce. Drusilla had wandered off. Then Jean looked at Will and started. He caught her before she had got to the walk, and they went out together.

Madame Wadham looked after them. Then she turned to Mrs. Druce.

"I am very fond of Jean, Cynthia," she remarked, "almost as fond of her as I am of Will."

Mrs. Druce laughed suddenly. "Now I wonder, mother," she said, "what you can be driving at."

Her mother laughed with her. "Well," she began defensively, "I won't deny — but I wonder whether it is worth while to be driving at anything. You would n't stir a finger to help."

"Not a finger," Mrs. Druce agreed. She chose not to pursue that subject, whatever it was. "Jean says she is not going to college yet," she observed. "Her father —"

"Bother her father!" sniffed Madame Wadham contemptuously. "The trying fool!"

CHAPTER V

MEANWHILE those two young people who were, at the moment, occupying the thoughts of their elders, drifted slowly down the road. Jean did not seem to be in such a great hurry. They did not talk much, but Jean was perfectly content in the moment. The future could take care of itself; which was a state of mind quite foreign to her nature. Beyond the wall which bounded the Druce place they came to a small and unpretentious house, comfortable and old and beautiful beneath two huge elms. Jean stopped short, and looked at it lovingly.

"I just love that house, Will," she said. "The very sight of it is restful. And do you realize how beautiful it is?"

"Grandmother's house?" Druce asked in some surprise. "Why, yes, it is beautiful, I know. I never thought much about it. I've always been used to it, you know."

Jean laughed. "And I have n't," she said. "I suppose you know its history — the house's history."

"Probably not so well as you know it, Jean. Grandmother would like to tell you, and I've no doubt she has. She was born there."

"Something she has told me, but not all. What sort of a man was your grandfather? Do you remember him?"

"My grandfather Wadham? Why, yes, vaguely. I was a little chap when he died, and they had lived in Europe for some years — various places. They were home now and then. He was consul or some other unimportant official in one place or another. Much less important," he added, laughing, "than you would think from grandmother's account. Kings and queens were not his only intimate friends."

"Why, Will!" said Jean, half-laughing, but yet somewhat shocked. "I'm sure you would n't say that to Madame Wadham."

"'Course I would n't. What would be the use? She has the idea firmly fixed in her mind that he was second in importance only to the president of this great and glorious country, and some doubt about relative rank even there, if they had each got their deserts. There's no reason to think that grandfather thought so. As I remember him, he was a very nice old gentleman, with rather a grand manner; not the sort of a man a boy plays bear with. I was rather afraid of him, although I think his relations with me were always those of one gentleman to another."

Jean laughed openly, then suddenly grew sober.

"I think, Will," she said, "that it's rather awful for you to say such things of your grandmother."

"Do you? No disrespect intended. Grandmother's the best ever; one of the salt of the earth. No end of courage, and kindness, and other good qualities, if there are any. Energy's her middle

name. Almost too much. She's always stirring us up, and stirring up, beyond a certain point, can be very uncomfortable. She can't stir mother up, though, and she has hard work getting father stirred up, but she never gives up hope. That's where her courage comes in, Jean. Don't you see?"

Jean laughed again. "I see. You're very absurd."

Billy Druce bowed. "Our aim is to amuse," he said.

"I infer that you personally don't like to be stirred up?" Jean asked, looking at him thoughtfully.

"Always fills me with sadness and makes me mad as hops," he replied, not looking at her. She resented his not looking at her. "I suppose it's good for me, though. Exercises my self-control, which needs exercise, and thereby strengthens it. I learn — somewhat slowly — to say nothing, and I go off and get over my mad, and I may profit by the stirring up. I don't know. I hope I do. It would be sad to be made so uncomfortable for no profit, now would n't it?"

Jean nodded very soberly. She was thinking that possibly she stirred him up and made him uncomfortable for no profit. It was the very farthest from her intention — her wish. She wished that she could always make him contented and happy, or if he was ever to be uncomfortable, which is inevitable for the happiest of us, that he might profit by it. He did not ask what she was thinking about, or offer a

penny for her thoughts, or show in any other way, however light, that her state of mind concerned him at all. As a matter of fact she had only the most casual part in his thoughts, and it never occurred to him to do anything of the kind. If it had, he would have done it, although he did not care a rap. She sighed deeply, and this attracted his attention.

"What's the matter, Jean?" he asked. "College?"

She shook her head. "Nothing," she said; "nothing much, I'm afraid, but the contrast between our house and Madame Wadham's."

They were within a few steps of her gate, and she was looking up at the house. It was not a beautiful house. It was large enough, in all conscience; much larger than Madame Wadham's, but it would have seemed ridiculous to call the Killians' house a homestead, while that was the first word that popped into your head when you caught even a distant sight of the Wadham house. The Killian house had been built during the height of the French roof period of architecture. The plan of it was the good old convenient plan: a hall through the middle, four rooms on a floor, an ell for the kitchen and the servants. No better plan has ever been devised, and one could not help wondering how on earth any man could manage to make a house with that plan look so like thunder, to quote Mr. William Druce. Probably it was through the use of dirty brown paint and the third story with its mansard roof. The house contained

twenty-three rooms, which had to serve for Mr. Killian and Jean, and occasionally a maid. The rooms were pleasant rooms, for it was impossible to see the outside of the house from the inside, praise God, as Billy Druce said, and as Jean thought.

They were not crowded in the Killian house. In fact, most of it was shut up tight during the winter, which added to its deserted and desolate aspect from the outside. It took a great deal of coal to heat it all, and, as Mr. Killian frequently asked of nobody in particular, what was the use? He asked the question with increasing frequency as the fall mornings and the fall evenings got colder, but Jean never answered. When the time came, she shut up more than half the doors, and stuffed the cracks with cotton batting, while Mr. Killian sat by the fire in his study, and stewed.

Jean had a maid in the summer, and sometimes in the winter. Her father grudgingly allowed her that privilege — when there was one to be had, and that one did not object to sleeping in a room which had no water, running or standing. It would not do to put water in the pitcher, for it infallibly froze — occasionally solid; and that as infallibly cracked the pitcher. As for supplying one's maid with a fresh pitcher every day, why — pshaw! Unreasonable! It would be cheaper to heat the room. So Mr. Killian said, and no doubt he was right. Any maid ought to be glad to sleep in a cold room. Better for 'em. It might be better for 'em to sleep out of doors,

but there are many people who do not care for sleeping out of doors, especially in the winter, and maids are usually among them; and, sleeping out or sleeping in, maids are absurdly prejudiced in favor of having decently warm rooms during the day. So it came about that Jean had a maid in the winter only sometimes and for short periods.

It was not winter yet, although it would be quite soon enough. Jean liked cold weather well enough, but she dreaded the winter, with the eternal struggle between the desire to induce a maid to come and her natural impulse to tell unvarnished truth. It was hard doing all the work in that great house by herself, with the furnace to take care of; Jean did not look robust enough to shovel coal. She was thinking of these things as she opened the gate, and she sighed again. But she smiled as she asked Will if he would not come in, for she knew he would not. She always asked him, and he never came; or almost never. It might be because of her father, or it might not. She wished she knew; but her father could help if he would.

Will Druce shook his head, and said he must go back. And he turned about, without a thought, and went, waving his hand to Jean as she stood holding the door open. Then he walked faster, as if getting back was the only thing in his head. Jean shut the door. Almost immediately the door of the study opened, and her father's head was poked out. His pointed beard pointed at her aggressively; his dark

hair was frowsy, his spectacles accusing; the deep furrow between his eyes was deeper than ever with annoyance, and the eyes themselves, looking over the rims of the spectacles, seemed to snap. Altogether, he was the very picture of paternal affection.

"May I ask, Jean," he asked, "why you consider it necessary to slam all the doors in the house?"

There were nearly forty doors, and slamming them all would have resembled, in its effects, the Fourth of July. But Jean did not make this obvious rejoinder. It might have been better if she had. Undoubtedly it would have produced an effect of a different nature from that of her actual reply.

"I beg your pardon, father," she said quietly. "I'm sorry I disturbed you."

"Disturb me!" he snorted. "How could it fail to disturb me? Where have you been?"

"To the Druces', father. Madame Wadham came —"

"The Druces! Madame Wadham! Pray, why Madame? Nothing less is good enough for her, I suppose. The Dowager Empress! The Queen Mother! And I must have her name continually thrown in my face! That woman! Faugh!"

With that parting shot the pointed beard was withdrawn suddenly, and Mr. Killian slammed the study door. He really slammed it, so that the sound of it echoed through the halls. Jean smiled a little sadly to herself, and went on, up the stairs, to her own room. Once there, she stood at the window for a

minute or so, gazing out thoughtfully. That window commanded a view which was dear to Jean. From it she could see Madame Wadham's back door, and many secret movements and acts of which the Wadham front door knew nothing.

She took off her hat slowly, opened a bureau drawer, and removed therefrom a picture of a young man, which she set where she could see it; then she removed from the same place what seemed to be work of some kind. Holding the work in her hand, she sat at the window, and looked in turn at the photograph, at the work in her hands, and out of the window; but she looked longer at one of her views than at the other two.

She let her hands fall into her lap, and she looked out absently at Madame Wadham's back door and at the vegetable garden "contagious thereto," as Patrick used to put it. Patrick used to work in that garden before he was transferred to the happy hunting grounds, where, as is well known, every man has a shillelah, and there is just law enough to give him the flavor of being ag'in' it.

Madame Wadham's house had never been the equal of the Druce house, and she often had occasion to be thankful that it was not too large for Baxter to take care of. Baxter was another old woman who carried a cane, and she carried it because she needed it. Madame Wadham never mentioned that fact, or its natural consequences, but everyone knew. At this point in her reflections

Jean heard Madame Wadham's back door click, and she saw a bent old woman making her way into the garden with the aid of a cane. On her arm she carried a basket. Then the back door clicked again, more loudly and more decidedly, and Madame Wadham came out, erect and tall, wielding her tall walking-stick. She walked swiftly to Baxter's side, and would have taken the basket, but Baxter made a mute protest. So Madame Wadham relinquished it, and stood by, as straight as a ramrod, while Baxter gathered vegetables, pulling a few carrots and some beets, and picking a half-dozen ears of corn. Then she found a small yellow sugar-pumpkin, which she held up for Madame Wadham to see.

Jean rose quickly, wondering how Madame Wadham had managed to get back from the Druces' without her seeing. She stopped only long enough to tuck a photograph into a drawer, then she ran down stairs and out and across the road. A pointed beard popped out of the study at the sound of her light footsteps, but she was already closing the front door carefully behind her. Her father made no remarks. He did not like to waste his affection on a mere door.

At the click of the gate-latch Madame Wadham turned.

"You see, my dear," she said, smiling, "we're about our daily chores. And," she added confidentially, "Baxter is as obstinate as ever."

Baxter looked up, a hint of a smile on her face.

"I'm the only obstinate one there is on this street, Miss Jean," she observed.

"The most obstinate, without a doubt," Madame Wadham said. "Jean, don't you want to come in to lunch, by and by, and have some corn pudding? Baxter, you know, makes very good corn pudding. Quite a dainty." She did not wait for a reply, but went to the corn and began to pick more.

"Oh, Madame Wadham," Jean cried, "let me pick it. You —"

"I am quite prepared, my dear," Madame Wadham interrupted, "and it is n't going to hurt me to pick a little corn." She held up her hand, displaying an old glove. "There ought to be another pudding, and the corn has to be of just the right age."

"But, Madame Wadham," Jean protested, "I should like very much to come, but my father —"

"Pooh, child, can't your father let you out of his sight?"

Jean smiled. "He would be all alone."

"I suppose he is all alone now. But never mind. Do as your conscience tells you, but don't be a slave to it. Perhaps that is bad advice, but I think not for you. I'm sorry if you won't come, for I always like to have you. Have you corn now? Then take this, if you don't mind."

Baxter was just taking up her loaded basket. Jean took it from her.

"Thank you, Miss Jean," she said. "Just set it inside the back door, if you please."

"Baxter is the most obstinate creature," Madame Wadham observed, when Jean was back again and Baxter had disappeared within the house. "She knows as well as you or I that I am quite able to help her, but she will have none of my help."

Jean knew, perhaps better than Madame Wadham was aware, of the tasks which Baxter found surreptitiously done for her, but she said nothing. She picked up her corn, and walked beside Madame Wadham to the front of the house. They stood at the gate for a few minutes, while Madame Wadham turned her sharp gray eyes absently down the road.

"Jean, dear," she said abruptly, "why can't you go to college? It is n't money difficulty, is it? I have n't much money, but perhaps I could manage to help a little." Jean did not answer immediately. "If only it were thirty years ago," Madame Wadham went on, "I could do better than help a little."

"Thank you for the wish," Jean replied simply. "I value it. But it is n't money difficulty. I think you know what it is. I don't give up hope."

"Never, Jean," said Madame Wadham quickly. "Nor intention. It has been my experience that a person gets, sooner or later, what he intends to get."

"I think I must be fated to get mine later," Jean returned, smiling wryly.

"There's plenty of time for you, Jean. Just think — what if I wanted to go to college, and could n't? I should like it very well, too, even now. I really believe that I should be more patient than —

but I don't know. I'm not a patient person. I may come to it yet. It's never too late to study new subjects. Good-bye, my dear. Remember, now." And Madame Wadham patted Jean's shoulder affectionately.

Jean nodded and smiled. "I will," she said. "Good-bye."

She walked slowly across the road, and around to the back door, carrying the corn. Her father did not even hear her come in, which was a pity, for he lost the opportunity of making his usual observations about slamming the doors.

CHAPTER VI

Mr. Chick walked down the street one morning, his face wearing an anxious look, paused a moment at the head of the wharf, then resolutely mounted the steps of the pavilion.

"'Ain't seen Tum, I s'pose, Elmer," he said, forgetting his greeting. "I looked in to'rds his place 's I come by, but they ain't no sign of 'im. I ain't seen him f'r two days."

Elmer had been watching a boat meandering over the surface of the harbor. There was a broad grin on his face as he turned.

"Hello, Chick. Getting anxious? You need n't. Nothing 'll happen to Tum. Look there." He pointed out over the harbor to the boat which he had been watching. "Seems to 'a' blossomed out as a skipper."

Mr. Chick's look followed Elmer's, and after some time it alighted upon the object of its search. His eyes widened, his mouth opened, his jaw dropped, but finally he spoke.

"Jumpin' Jiminy!" said Mr. Chick in disgust. "Now where in thunder 'd he git that — that direlick? 'T looks 's if 't was off some ash-pile — an' had ought to 've been left onto it."

Elmer laughed and shook his head. The craft which had excited the contempt of Mr. Chick was

still a couple of hundred yards away, but even at that distance, there was no difficulty in making it out as what had once been a skiff, patched with old shingles and with pieces of tin which shone in the sun. It had originally been painted black, apparently, but was now, for the most part, bare of paint and weather-beaten. Its mast was a short pole with the bark on, and none too straight, its sail a leg-of-mutton of burlap; and reclining at ease in the stern was Mr. Tumbleberry himself, steering with the half of a split oar, his long legs stretched out over the thwarts, and contentment stamped on his countenance — which was too far off for Mr. Chick to see. But Chick knew well enough.

"He's comin' here, ain't he, Elmer?" asked Mr. Chick. "Lucky 't th' tide's still comin'. 'F he makes it 'fore it turns he'll make it, an' 'f he don't he won't. 'Guess I'll go on down t' th' end o' th' wharf."

Mr. Tumbleberry had no difficulty in recognizing the well-known form of Mr. Chick standing just behind the stringpiece at the end of the wharf, and he waved his arm, with a free gesture.

"Hello, Chick!" he bellowed in a voice clearly audible to Mr. Chick. "Y' might 's well set down to wait, but jest 's y' like. I ain't in no hurry, an' I may be a consid'rable time a-gittin' in. 'F 't was me I sh'd set down, but mebbe you'll be jest 's comf'table stan'in'."

The allusion, only half veiled, to his figure, as well

as Mr. Tumbleberry's assumption that Mr. Chick's chief occupation in life was waiting for him, somehow angered Chick, and the ready flush began to mantle his cheek. He clenched his hands and turned away, but his hands unclenched almost immediately, the red subsided, and he meekly sat down. He tried to make Mr. Tumbleberry understand that he had an engagement and could not wait, but his voice lacked the carrying quality of Mr. Tumbleberry's. Mr. Tumbleberry's assumption stood. In Mr. Tumbleberry's opinion Chick's engagements were of no consequence anyway.

The skiff pursued its meandering and erratic course over the surface of the harbor, Mr. Tumbleberry, at peace with the world, paying little attention to the course, but letting wind and tide do their worst while he gazed about him. It was very nearly his ideal of work, and Chick had been fairly warned. He was a consid'rable time a-gittin' in, but at last the skiff was drifting past Mr. Chick, beyond his reach. A near view of the skiff confirmed Mr. Chick's worst fears.

"C'me on, Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry thundered. "Come aboard. We're a-goin' down t' th' breakwater."

Mr. Chick shook his head. "I hollered to you 't I'd promised th' mornin' t' Jean Killian. So I can't go, Tum."

"Sho!" said Mr. Tumbleberry. "That's too bad, Chick. What'd Jean want y' sh'd do?"

"She said she sh'd want some arrants," began Mr. Chick, "an' f'r —"

"Arrants!" Mr. Tumbleberry ejaculated scornfully. "Wants you sh'd bresh off th' front walk, I s'pose, an' a yeas'cake an' one thing 'r another. 'T ain't of any consequence, 't ain't likely. An' here I be, come up a-purpose t' git you, an' wind an' tide servin' f'r us t' git t' th' breakwater. You hurry up an' git y'r lines from Elmer an' hop in. Tide's about turned. An' I can't guarantee 't I c'n hold 'er here, 'r 't I c'n git 'er in any nearer. Y' 'll have to jump from th' wharf I think likely."

"Jump from here!" cried Mr. Chick. "If I was to make it at all I'd go clear through y'r rotten ol' bo't."

"Well, ne' mind, Chick," said Mr. Tumbleberry soothingly. "Y' would n't sink. There ain't no danger, an' you an' me'd go down t' th' breakwater together, you a-floatin' an' me in the bo't."

"I don't see how y' make that out," said Mr. Chick somewhat excitedly. "F'r if I busted through the bottom 'f y'r ol' bo't, 't would throw you into th' water 's well 's me, an' *you* would n't float, y''re so almighty thin. This 'ere force o' gravity, Tum, would give way. 'T's only bein' in th' water 't holds 'er together."

"This bo't or vessel," said Mr. Tumbleberry with dignity, "was abandoned by 'er owner. He had n't no further use f'r 'er, an' I fixed her up an' made her seaworthy."

"Seaworthy!" Mr. Chick snorted.

"But I did n't figger on havin' hawgsheads dumped into her," continued Mr. Tumbleberry, paying no attention to the interruption, "an' mebbe she would n't stan' it. Mebbe y' 're right, Chick. But y' better hurry up. She's a'most to the corner of th' wharf now, an' if she once gits by, they's no tellin' where she'll bring up. You git y'r lines an' come on."

"Can't git my lines. They're home," grumbled Mr. Chick. His reluctance was as great as ever, but it was beaten down. "Can't y' noways git her in closter, Tum? I ain't a-goin' t' go an' jump ov'-board."

"I might make it," said Mr. Tumbleberry judicially, "if you was t' throw me a line. Don't you see a line handy, Chick? Or a bo'thook 'd do, 'r a pole. Can't you find a pole, Chick?"

Mr. Chick glanced hastily around. "You might 'a' knowed they wa'n't no poles lyin' around on this wharf, nor no lines neither." He saw an escape for himself. "'Guess I might 's well go on up, Tum. They ain't no way, 's fur 's I c'n see."

He turned, and started up the wharf, but was arrested before he had taken two steps.

"Here, Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry bellowed, "y' take a-holt o' this." He was holding out the split oar with which he had been steering. "Lay down on y'r stummick on th' stringpiece, an' grab a-holt 'f it. Reach 's fur 's you can an' you'll git it."

Mr. Chick obeyed, lying on his stomach, reaching out with one hand and holding on for his life with the other hand behind the stringpiece, while he complained querulously. It was touch and go; but he did just manage to get his fingers on the end of the oar, which Mr. Tumbleberry held out at the utmost extremity he could — without moving.

Mr. Chick's complaints subsided in a series of grunts, and he gradually edged backward into a more secure position. Mr. Tumbleberry got a hold on the stones of the wharf, Mr. Chick picked himself up with some difficulty, and with even more difficulty and some danger he managed to let himself down until he could step in with Mr. Tumbleberry.

"Jumpin' Jiminy!" said Mr. Chick with a deep sigh of relief. "Them stones is awful slippery."

"'Course they be," Mr. Tumbleberry thundered cheerfully. "'Course they be. I thought y' was gone, one time, Chick. But ne' min', all present 'r accounted for. Now I'll see if she'll come about. She don't mind 'er helm perfect — not perfect."

"Huh!" Mr. Chick grunted. "Does she do anything perfect? Perfect wreck, that's what she is, I sh'd call her. A'most pulled me ov'board."

"What you sore at, Chick?" asked Mr. Tumbleberry in surprise. "There y' be, safe an' sound, an' y' c'd be comf'table if y' wanted t' be, but y' don't an' y' won't. Now I should n't wonder a mite 'f she 'd come about easier by hand. Y' might stan' up,

Chick, an' take a-holt o' the stones an' hold 'er while I work 'er stern around with the oar."

Mr. Chick glared at the stones, slimy and slippery, covered with weed; then he glared at Mr. Tumbleberry.

"Won't be satisfied," he said explosively, "till y' have me hove ov'board. I ain't a-goin' t' do it, Tum. You c'n see f'r y'rself 't I'd have to go around forrard o' th' mast — I s'pose you call that frazzled piece o' wild cherry limb a mast — an' they ain't no room."

Mr. Tumbleberry glanced appraisingly from Mr. Chick's rotundity to the mast. "I see," he rumbled calmly. "Somethin' t' do with th' force o' gravity, I think likely."

"Somethin' t' do with it!" cried Mr. Chick scornfully. "Sh'd think it was. It's th' centre o' gravity — mine — an' it would stick out over th' water, an' it'd be jest th' same 's if a rope was hitched on to it an' they was pullin' on the rope like gosh a'mighty."

"Well," said Mr. Tumbleberry, "why 'n't you let 'em have it? I can't see no use 't a centre o' gravity is t' a man. I'd jest 's soon part with mine, an' anybody c'd take it an' welcome. That's th' way I look at it."

During Mr. Tumbleberry's discourse the skiff had been pursuing her way on the face of the waters. In this instance her way had been to whirl about, without Mr. Tumbleberry's assistance, and to head down toward the breakwater.

"You see, Chick," boomed Mr. Tumbleberry with dignity, "'t I've got this vessel about, an' she's headin' for th' breakwater. She'll git there, I think likely, pretty soon — pretty fairly soon, an' we c'n foller our wishes, whatsomever they may be."

"Huh!" Mr. Chick muttered gloomily. "Foller our wishes! In this direlick! Huh!"

The circumstances were too much for Mr. Chick. With a further unintelligible muttering, which might have been to the effect that he wished that he was ashore, but he did n't see no chancet of ever gittin' ashore ag'in, he lapsed into a moody silence, and turned his face from Mr. Tumbleberry to the harbor. A motor boat passed them, bound in. Mr. Chick watched the advancing wave from her bow; the wave passed under them, the skiff pitched to it, and water swoshed and sloshed about his ankles.

"Jumpin' Jiminy!" he cried, looking down suddenly. "Y'r ol' direlick 's leakin'."

"This vessel does leak a mite," observed Mr. Tumbleberry calmly, "but it need n't to bother you 'f y' put y'r feet up, same 's I do. Y' might bail her out, Chick," he went on. "Better start th' pumps."

"Bail 'er out!" cried Mr. Chick indignantly. "Why've I got t' bail 'er out?"

"Y' ain't got to, Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry said mildly, "'nless y' want th' water out of 'er. I'm jest 's well satisfied 's it is. They 's four 'r five inches t' spare 'fore it'll bother me."

Mr. Chick glared at Mr. Tumbleberry and then

at the water sloshing back and forth in the bottom of Mr. Tumbleberry's vessel. "Ol' direlick!" he muttered. Mr. Tumbleberry took no notice of his muttering. Mr. Chick sighed deeply. "Well, where's y'r bailer, Tum?"

"I did n't make out t' git me a bailer," Mr. Tumbleberry replied. "They wa'n't none handy. Jest take y'r hat."

"Take my hat!" Mr. Chick cried. "Take my hat! But, Tum, it'll sp'ile my hat. 'T won't never be th' same shape ag'in." Mr. Chick wore a stiff hat, summer and winter.

"Well," boomed Mr. Tumbleberry, "'f you ask me, I sh'd say 't it 'd be jest 's well. Now, I sh'd say, w'thout inspectin' it careful', 't that hat 'd come into contact 'th water a number o' times. What's one time more nor less? 'T won't cut any figger. But you c'n suit y'rself, Chick. They ain't nothin' else."

Mr. Chick made no reply. He glared at the water in the skiff. It was getting deeper. He got red in the face, seized his hat violently, muttered incoherently, and began to bail.

"Y' 're a peppery feller, Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry observed calmly. "I sh'd think y'r common sense 'd tell you t' choose y'r time better. But suit y'rself."

Strangely enough, this speech calmed Mr. Chick. The excess of red faded from his cheek and he bailed in silence, while the skiff went on her way toward the breakwater. Mr. Tumbleberry apparently in-

tended to land on it, which he could do easily enough at almost any tide. Mr. Chick was ignorant of his intention, being occupied with his bailing. Bobbing on the waves was a small flotilla of lobster pot buoys scattered at intervals along the breakwater, and about a hundred feet or so from it. The skiff sailed faster as it approached, and it swept close by one of the buoys, so close that Mr. Chick's hat was almost knocked from his hand.

He looked up hastily. "What y' tryin' t' do, Tum? Y' 'most lost m' hat f'r me."

"She don't mind 'er helm none too well," Mr. Tumbleberry boomed. "They's nothin' but lobster pots, Chick. Ain't y' never see lobster b'oys? They's one right ahead. Jest ketch a-holt of it, Chick. Grab it 's we go by. It'll stop 'er way a mite, I think likely. I was thinkin' o' landin'."

"Landin'!" Mr. Chick exclaimed. "'F y'r ol' direlick keeps on a-goin' at this clip, an' faster 's we git there, she'll never live t' make a landin'. Th' nigher she gits t' a rock th' faster sh' goes. Can't y' come up, Tum? Can't y' steer 'er?"

"There she is, Chick, under y'r hand," bellowed Mr. Tumbleberry. "Ketch a-holt of it, an' hang on."

Mr. Chick, taken somewhat by surprise, did ketch a-holt of the black and white block of wood. In the sudden process he tipped the skiff gunwale under, taking in more water than he had been able to get out with all his laborious bailing; and he lost

his hold upon his hat, being forced to a sudden hold on the gunwale to save himself. The hat bobbed cheerfully, crown down, and was slowly floating out of reach.

"Ne' min', Chick," said Mr. Tumbleberry comfortingly, "I'll git it. You hang on t' that b'oy." He withdrew the steering oar from the water, speared the hat skilfully with the broken end, and passed it to Mr. Chick on the end of the oar. "I ain't hurt it none wuth mentionin'. I guess we're runnin' off 'th th' lobster pot. Draggin', ain't she? It's jest 's well. It stopped 'er way more 'n a mite. Y' might haul in on that line. Jest haul th' pot up so 's we c'n see it."

A warm hue suffused Mr. Chick's cheek, but he hauled, meekly and in silence until the pot was at the surface of the water. Mr. Tumbleberry bent over and inspected it.

"Can't see 'er none too well," Mr. Tumbleberry remarked. "Jest give a couple more pulls, Chick. 'T stan's t' reason 't we'd ought t' see what 's in 'er, short lobsters 'r whatever."

Mr. Tumbleberry was neglecting his vessel. At this moment the skiff jibed, whirled about and brought to with the pot out ahead, like a fractious horse pulling back on his halter.

"Now see what y''ve gone an' done, Tum," Mr. Chick cried querulously. "Can't see 'er none too well now."

"Don't you go an' git wrought up, Chick,"

Mr. Tumbleberry boomed in soothing tones. "'T don't make any difference. You c'n see 's well 's I can. Jest haul 'er in a mite an' see what they is in 'er."

Mr. Chick obediently hauled her in a mite, leaned over and peered into the depths of the lobster pot, but said nothing.

"Well, Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry bellowed impatiently, "'you gone an' got paralysed or what is it? Why 'n't y' tell us what's in it?"

"Can't see none too well," answered Mr. Chick, too much occupied to be annoyed. "They's somethin' into it, but I can't make out what 't is."

"Why 'n't y' jest lift 'er aboard?" Mr. Tumbleberry suggested. "Jest heave 'er in, an' y''ll make 'er out well enough, I should n't wonder."

Accordingly Mr. Chick lifted. He heaved until the gunwale of the skiff was level with the water, then he let the pot go again.

"She won't come, Tum," he said, "'thout fillin' y'r ol' direlick full o' water. Jest haul it over the stern 'f y' want it aboard."

Mr. Tumbleberry ignored the suggestion.

"Did n't y' see nothin'?"

"I see three 'r four into it," Mr. Chick replied, "but I would n't say certain 'f they's shorts 'r 'f they ain't."

During this interchange of ideas the skiff had been drifting to leeward at an incredible rate. The ebbing tide had exposed the flattish back of a rock about

as long as the skiff, and straight upon it she drifted, stern first. The speed with which a skiff can drift in a brisk breeze is no less than astonishing, and Mr. Tumbleberry's wandering attention was rather suddenly arrested when a receding swell let her down upon the rock and nearly precipitated him over the stern.

"Mighty!" he said when he had recovered his balance. "She 'most broke m' back. This vessel certain c'n drift fast. I was aimin' to make a landin' a-top of ol' Turtle, but I did n't think she'd land so sudden. I knowed th' tide'd be about right f'r us t' land here an' investigate th' pot, an' mebbe make some repairs."

"'T ain't," said Mr. Chick briefly. "Top ain't dry yet, an' every other wave goes clean over it. Y' could n't stan' on it 'thout gettin' y'r feet wet."

"Y'r feet 're wet a'ready, Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry observed, "so 't won't make no diff'rence. Now, mine ain't, 'cause I had 'em up. Jest step out an' haul th' pot up. Then we c'n look into it an' see what they is there, an' 'f it's best we c'n take 'em out."

"Take 'em out!" cried Mr. Chick in consternation. "What 'y' want t' take 'em out for? An' who c'n take 'em out? Not me. They ain't no fish-market lobsters, jest able t' crawl 's if they wa' n't no life into 'em. They's life into these all right. 'F you want 'em out y' c'n take 'em out y'rself."

"Jest give a heave on that line, will ye, Chick?"

Mr. Tumbleberry said mildly, as if Mr. Chick had not spoken. "Y''ll have t' git out t' do it easy. Y' won't git y'r feet wet none wuth mentionin'. Tide's fallin' every minute. There! Now heave 'er nigh th' gunwale."

Mr. Chick sighed, but he heaved in silence, and the pot rose, with the lobsters a squirming heap on the bottom.

"Th' way I look at it 't's like this," began Mr. Tumbleberry benevolently. "Now them lobsters 's wild beasts o' nature, an' anybody c'n ketch 'em, subjec' t' th' law o' th' land — an' o' th' water. They ain't no law ag'in 'em 'ceptin' only th' shorts. Some poor onfort'nit' feller, seein' them shorts, 'd go an' be tempted t' peddle 'em. An' he'd git ketched a-doin' of it, 's like 's not, an' fined an' sent up f'r thutty days. I see it's a favor t' him an' f'r his good t' remove temptation fr'm his path. So," continued Mr. Tumbleberry in his familiar boom, carried away by his own eloquence, "we'll remove th' shorts, an' take 'em away. 'F they was t' be throwed back here they ain't got no more sense 'n t' crawl in th' pots ag'in, I think likely. So I'll jest take 'em an' dispose of 'em."

"What'll you do with 'em, Tum?" Mr. Chick inquired mildly.

"Well," answered Mr. Tumbleberry, "I ain't decided, but mebbe I'll take an' put 'em in the water ag'in some'eres else."

"B'ilin'?" asked Mr. Chick.

"That would drownd 'em, Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry said reprovingly. "Y' would n't go an' drownd a lobster, would you, when he ain't done y' no harm?"

CHAPTER VII

"Y' KNOW, Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry resumed reflectively, "'t big fellers don't eat noways s' good 's little fellers. 'Course y' know it. Not 't I sh'd 'dvise y' meddlin' 'th th' shorts. Y''d git ketched, sure. Y' ain't th' kind," Mr. Tumbleberry added hastily, for he noted the color rising in Mr. Chick's cheek, "t' meddle 'th shorts successful'. Y''re too honest, Chick. 'F y' see an inspector y''d git red an' han' out th' shorts 'fore he's nigh enough t' see 't they wa' n't a roast o' beef. Jest pick 'em out, Chick, an' heave 'em into th' bo't."

Mr. Chick turned and spoke with some asperity. "I ain't a-goin' t' do it, Tum. Pick 'em out 'th m' bare hands! They'd be tore t' ribbons."

"It's easy, Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry bellowed soothingly. "They ain't no resk about it 'f y''re a mite careful. Jest watch th' one y''re after, an' grab 'im quick jest behin' 'is pinchers. Then he can't git at y' an' y' c'n heave 'im into th' bo't."

"I see it done a plenty o' times b' th' lobsterers," Mr. Chick returned, shaking his head firmly. "They most ginerally has some fingers gone, I notice. Jest pick 'em out y'rself 'f it's so easy."

"Well, Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry boomed, stirring himself with reluctance, "'f y' 're afraid t' tackle 'em I 'll pick one of 'em out, jest t' show y' 't

they ain't no resk to it. Jest heave th' pot a mite nigher. They ain't no need 'f my gittin' up. It's harder f'r me t' git up onto m' feet 'n what 't is f'r you t' heave th' pot over jest a mite."

In silence Mr. Chick heaved th' pot over jest a mite. Mr. Tumbleberry glanced carelessly in, waved his long arm, plunged his hand quickly in and drew it out again, and in the same motion cast into the bottom of the skiff — not one, but three lively young lobsters, each nipping the next fiercely and firmly by the claws. Mr. Chick was amazed and awe-struck. Mr. Tumbleberry also was amazed, but he did not show it. He had never before ventured to handle lobsters fresh from the water. That his venture was a success was due to the fact that their nippers were already engaged.

"Jumpin' Jiminy!" said Mr. Chick presently.

"I told y' 't was easy," Mr. Tumbleberry said nonchalantly. "Y' c'd 'a' done it easy 's I could. Ain't they no more, Chick?"

Mr. Chick peered into the pot. "Ain't no more but a big feller."

"We'll leave him," Mr. Tumbleberry rumbled in high good humor. "We ain't got no right t' take him, Chick, an' I guess y' better not."

"I ain't no idea o' takin' 'im, Tum," Mr. Chick replied, his voice high and querulous. "I ain't had no idea o' takin' any of 'em. It's you 't 's taken 'em, an' it's you 't 's responsible f'r 'em."

To this Mr. Tumbleberry paid no attention.

"We better put th' pot back in th' same place where it was, nigh's we c'n make it. But 'f y' 'bjec' t' a little water comin' int' th' bo't, I see where th' plates 's started a mite. That's where she leaks. I think likely. Jest stuff y'r han'k'chief in, Chick. I must 'a' lost mine, 'r I'd use that."

"Lost it!" muttered Mr. Chick. "Huh! Plates started! Y' mean where th' tacks 's come out o' that piece o' tin? Y' had n't ought t' 'a' used ol' tacks."

"Well, Chick," said Mr. Tumbleberry with a slight show of impatience, "'re y' goin' to, 'r ain't y'? Better shove 'er off pretty soon, 'r y''ll have hard work a-doin' of it 'th me in 'er. Tide's fallin' every minute."

"I ain't no idea o' shovin' 'er off 'th you in 'er," Mr. Chick stated, distinctly and calmly. "'F I can't do it easy y''ll have t' git out an' help shove. Ain't y' got no ol' rag, Tum, 'sides th' one y' got f'r a sail?"

"Well, no, Chick, I ain't," Mr. Tumbleberry thundered. "I did n't make out t' git me none. But ne' min', y'r han'k'chief 'll do jest 's well. Salt water ain't a-goin' t' hurt it none."

Mr. Chick made no intelligible reply, but stuffed his blue bandanna into the yawning crack with more vigor than was necessary. Then he shoved. The skiff started without too much effort, but Mr. Chick's face was redder than ever as he stepped in on top of the three lobsters, still locked in their fierce em-

brace. They immediately released themselves and simultaneously attacked Mr. Chick's ankles.

"Consarn them lobsters!" he cried, stamping to get rid of them.

"I would n't stomp y'r feet 'f I was you," Mr. Tumbleberry observed. "Y''ll have th' bottom out 'f 'er, an' then where'll y' be? Put y'r feet up, Chick. 'F y' ain't able t' put y'r feet up b'cause y'r stummick's in th' way jest lay down an' put 'em up."

Obediently, Mr. Chick lay on his back across the thwarts, and the lobsters, one at a time, dropped off.

"Where's th' pot?" asked Mr. Tumbleberry. It was not in the skiff, and he looked back. The lobster pot was on the rock, where they had left it. "Sho! Why 'n't y' put it in th' bo't, Chick? We'd ought t' put th' pot back where 't was, but we can't git it now. It'll have t' stay there, an' mebbe 't 'll slide off when th' tide rises. But y''d ought t' 'a' taken it aboard, Chick. Don't do us no good where 't is."

Mr. Chick made no reply, but looked up at the little fleecy clouds, his thoughts far away. There was no sound but the scratching and rattling of the three lobsters as they raced to and fro, and the gentle lapping of the water about the sides of the skiff.

After a rather long interval of silence Mr. Chick spoke.

"Them clouds, now." Mr. Chick pointed upward with a pudgy finger. "There they be a-sailin'

along, an' they stay up. An' th' force o' gravity 's a-pullin' of 'em down. They seem light an' they look light, but they must be *some* heavy. I' been a-wonderin' what 't is 't keeps 'em up there. They 's a power of a ways up, but why 'n't they come down? Tell m' that."

"Why, yes, Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry replied deliberately, after a cursory glance upward, "I c'n tell y' an' I will, cheerful'. They don't come down b'cause that's where they belong. Y' don't never see them kind o' clouds anywheres else 'n a couple o' mile high 'r up'ards. They tell me that's th' heighth o' them little wispy clouds. Now is that satisfact'ry?"

"No," said Mr. Chick, "it ain't. I ast y' why they don't come down, an' y' tell me 't it's 'cause 't 's where they be. 'T ain't no answer, any ways y' look at it. What I want t' know is *why* they do *as* they do. 'F y' don' know why 'n't y' say so? 'Stid o' that, y' say *bee-cause*, jest like a gal. 'S th' same thing, Tum."

Mr. Chick raised himself partly erect, and his feet were forced off the thwart where they had been resting, as if propelled by a powerful spring. They came down upon one of the lobsters, smashing his shell.

"Now look what y' gone an' done, Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry bellowed pleasantly. "No more roamin' th' pleasant pastures 't th' bottom o' th' harbor f'r him, but he'll be et alive 'f I don't tie these other

wild hosses. Y' can't blame th' lobster none when a stone-pounder comes down onto 'im."

Mr. Tumbleberry managed to secure a piece of string, a ravelling of the burlap sail adorning his vessel, and he tied the remaining lobsters together.

"'F them lobsters was t' agree better," Mr. Chick remarked, his attention attracted momentarily by the noise of their struggles, "they'd git some'eres. Now where d' they git? Jest like folks. Now you take Mexico —"

"I ain't a-goin' t' take Mexico," Mr. Tumbleberry interrupted, "not 'th a half a dollar cash t' boot. Now, Chick, we're a-gittin' some'eres nigh th' wharf. 'F you c'n git up 'thout throwin' y'r feet through th' bottom o' this vessel, I sh'd 'dvise y' t' git up."

Mr. Chick sighed. "I'll git up 'n a minute, Tum," he said regretfully. "I feel 's though I'd have a crick 'n m' back 'f I don't git up careful', it's so fur b'tween th'arts."

"Y' suit y'rself, Chick," answered Mr. Tumbleberry. "I' been a-wonderin' how y' done it. They ain't nothin' wuth mentionin' under y'r back, but y'r back's too short f'r you t' have a real crick. Now, 'f 't was me, m' back might be broke, I think likely. Y' know 't ain't none too strong. I must make out t' git me a board, so 't I c'n lay down comf'table."

Mr. Chick struggled, with many grunts and groans, to assume an erect posture. He was so en-

gaged in the struggle that he had no opportunity to look about him, and the wharf was behind him anyway. He had no sooner achieved his object than the bow of the skiff ran plump into the stones of the wharf, throwing Mr. Chick backward between the thwarts, his knees over one and his head resting on the forward thwart. There was a gentle noise of splintering, and the mast and its burlap sail slowly sagged forward. The skiff began to swing, held by its bow.

All this did not trouble Mr. Tumbleberry. He continued to lean back, resting on his elbow.

"Well, Chick," he bellowed triumphantly, "I made out t' make me a landin' that time, certain."

"Yes, y' did!" cried that indignant gentleman. "Landin'! What kind 'f a landin' 's that? 'T ain't no landin', any ways y' look at it. Throwed me off th' th'art an' left me so's I can't git up, an' me a-settin' int' th' water. An' carried away y'r mast int' th' bargain! Landin'! It's a waterin', that's what it is, I sh'd call it."

"Ne' min', Chick," said Mr. Tumbleberry soothingly. "Th' mast's nothin' wuth mentionin'. Shaved it a little mite fine at th' step, I should n't wonder. I'll make out t' git me my mast fixed. 'T won't make it more 'n three four inches shorter. 'T won't matter a mite. Don't y' worry, Chick."

"I ain't a-worryin' 'bout y'r mast," retorted Mr. Chick in growing anger. "Don't care 'f it's three

four foot shorter — 'n' then where'd y' be? I tell y' 't I'm a settin' int' th' water, wedged 'tween th' th'arts so 's I can't git up. An' th' water 's bein' drawed up by capilliary 'traction, rapid'. Might 's well gone ov'board an' done 'th it."

"Well, Chick," said Mr. Tumbleberry more soothingly than ever, "don't y' go an' git mad. Y' won't ketch cold. Salt water ain't a-goin' t' hurt y' none. 'T ain't safe, Chick, f'r you t' git mad, y' git so all-fired red. This vessel 'll come around so 't we c'n make it, an' I c'n give y' a hand, settin' where I be, I think likely, so 't y' c'n git up in time t' ketch a-holt o' th' wharf."

Mr. Tumbleberry stretched out a long arm and hoisted Mr. Chick upright. The water dripped from him.

"Y' did git a little mite wet, did n't y'?" Mr. Tumbleberry observed casually. "Ne' min', Chick, it'll dry. Y' might ketch a-holt o' th' wharf, so's t' ease 'er a mite."

"Ease her!" muttered the exasperated Mr. Chick, as he turned to do it. "Ol' direlick! No better 'n a sieve! Y' 'd ought t' name 'er th' Sieve, Tum. Th' good ship Sieve, Tumbleberry master, arrived in port to-day. Only nobody would n't know whether 't was at th' top o' th' water 't she arrived 'r on th' bottom o' th' harbor. How'd y' like t' see that in th' Marine News, Tum?" He gave a shrill cackle of laughter.

"Well, no, Chick," said Mr. Tumbleberry after

deliberation, "I could n't name 'er Sieve. I would n't go an' cast reflections on this vessel. Give a vessel a bad name, an' —"

"Drownd 'er," Mr. Chick broke in, chuckling. "Sh' 'd ought t' be named th' Sieve." Mr. Chick's manipulations had brought the skiff around the corner of the wharf, and she was going stern-first to the steps, her broken mast lying forward, the sail trailing in the water. "Now I'll ketch a-holt o' th' steps, an' then I'm a-goin' home t' git me some dry clo'es."

"We got t' stay an' make 'er shipshape," Mr. Tumbleberry objected. "Wa' n't y' a-goin' t' help me 'th th' — th' duties, Chick?"

Mr. Chick mumbled something about being pretty wet.

"Well," said Mr. Tumbleberry graciously, "I'll let y' off, Chick. Jest take them lobsters along. Y' might leave 'em b' th' steps o' th' p'vilion some'eres. It'd be jest 's well 'f Elmer did n't see 'em."

Mr. Chick's face was turned toward the wharf, but Mr. Tumbleberry saw the wave of red surge up the back of his neck and then saw it subside. Mr. Chick did not speak for nearly a minute.

"No, Tum," he said then, "I ain't a-goin' t' have nothin' t' do 'th them lobsters more 'n what I have. You took 'em out o' th' pot, an' you're responsible f'r 'em, an' I ain't a-goin' t' have 'em saddled onto me no more."

Mr. Tumbleberry took no notice of this announce-

ment. "Jest make 'er fast, Chick," he said. "Y' 'll find a line some'eres."

"Th' ain't no line," said Mr. Chick, "an' y' know they ain't."

"Well, ne' min', Chick. I'll make out t' git me a line some'eres." Mr. Chick had scrambled up the steps and was making off. "Hol' on, Chick." Mr. Tumbleberry's voice reverberated among the buildings. "Y' f'rgot these." The two lobsters flew high in the air, a wiggling mass of legs, and fell at Mr. Chick's feet.

Mr. Chick turned and glared at Mr. Tumbleberry. "I tol' y' 't I was n't a-goin' t' be saddled 'th 'em," he was beginning, in a high and querulous voice.

"Here's th' other," Mr. Tumbleberry boomed. "I s'pose that's what y' 're waitin' for. I 'most f'rgot it. 'S all right, Chick. I'll fix up this vessel."

Mr. Chick sighed and picked up the lobsters by the end of the string. "'Sh'd think them lobsters was centipedes," he muttered.

Mr. Tumbleberry looked after him as he bobbed up the wharf and disappeared behind the pavilion. Mr. Tumbleberry continued to lean on his elbow for some time, a pleasant smile upon his face. At last the time arrived when he was tiring of holding to the steps with one hand, and he looked around him. Providentially there was within reach of his hand the bow of a cat-boat, not too shipshape, and on her deck lay a piece of old rope. It reeked with age. To be sure, it formed, at that moment, part of her run-

ning rigging, but nobody would miss it. The transfer took no time at all. Mr. Tumbleberry tied his skiff to the steps, got out, and shambled up the wharf.

Elmer was alone in the pavilion, occasionally chuckling to himself.

"H'lo, Elmer!" boomed Mr. Tumbleberry heartily. "Y' ain't seen Chick, I s'pose. D' he stop in here on 'is way up?"

Another fit of chuckling seized Elmer. "Yes," he said, between chuckles, "he stopped here."

"Why?" asked Mr. Tumbleberry. "What's the joke?"

"Chick got pinched."

"Chick pinched!" Mr. Tumbleberry cried. "Sho! What's he done? He ain't done nothin'. Whoever had 'im pinched made a mistake, I should n't wonder a mite. Who pinched 'im?"

"Inspector," Elmer replied briefly; "for having short lobsters."

"Sho!" Mr. Tumbleberry said, apparently in the depths of dejection. "That's too bad! Now, I'll have t' go down an' bail 'im out, I think likely. D' th' inspector take th' evidence with him? What was th' evidence anyway?"

Elmer signified that he knew nothing about that.

Mr. Tumbleberry turned toward the head of the steps. "I'll have t' think it over a mite," he said thoughtfully. "'F it's best, I'll go down. That inspector made a mistake, I think likely. Chick

ain't done nothin' t' git pinched for. He's too honest."

He was looking carefully about as he spoke, but could not see what he was looking for. At last his attention was drawn by a persistent gentle commotion in the tall, dusty grass close by the wall of the pavilion. He strode to the spot, bent over, and picked up the three lobsters.

"They ain't a mite o' doubt," observed Mr. Tumbleberry in a deep rumble, as he turned the lobsters over in his hands and slipped them into his pocket, "'t that inspector ain't got a mite o' evidence 'g'inst Chick, an' he'll have t' give 'im 's carfare back. Chick's clo'es must be a'most dry b' this time. 'Guess I'll be goin', Elmer."

With a wave of his hand Mr. Tumbleberry was off; his long, loose shamble carrying him along at a surprising speed. Just before he turned into his path he stopped and looked both ways on the street. The only thing in sight was a rickety wagon drawn by a rickety horse. The wagon was piled high with old planks, and on the seat sat an old man holding the reins, which lay loose on the horse's back.

"It's Wolly-am Flaherty," Mr. Tumbleberry muttered. "I might do business 'th 'im, I should n't wonder." And he settled himself to wait, leaning on the fence.

When the wagon was nearly abreast of him he waved a long arm.

"Wolly-am!" Mr. Tumbleberry boomed.

The old man seemed to wake up with a start, and pulled his horse to a stop. The horse was willing enough.

"Y' ought t' be more careful with y'r voice, Tumbleberry," the old man said sharply. "Nigh had me fallin' off the seat. What is it?"

He was a sharp old man with a sharp old voice and bushy white eyebrows, and eyes under them which seemed to bore through a man.

"I see you a-comin', Wolly-am," said Mr. Tumbleberry, "an' I thought y' 'd buy a couple o' nice lobsters." And he drew — with some difficulty — from his pocket the two lobsters tied together.

"Shorts, eh?" he said briefly.

"Well," Mr. Tumbleberry said apologetically, "I did n't have no gauge handy. D' they look like shorts t' you?"

Wolly-am made no reply, but reached under the seat and brought forth a gauge, which he skilfully applied to the lobsters. It was done so quickly that Mr. Tumbleberry could not follow the operation.

"Shorts," said Wolly-am. "Give ye eight cents apiece, an' I'll take the resk." He reached into his pocket, and brought out a great handful of change, from which he counted sixteen cents into Mr. Tumbleberry's outstretched hand.

Mr. Tumbleberry began a feeble remonstrance, but Wolly-am cut him short.

"Eight cents 's the price to-day. Do ye take it or don't ye?"

"WELL," MR. TUMBLEBERRY SAID APOLOGETICALLY, "I DIDN'T HAVE NO GAUGE HANDY. D' THEY LOOK LIKE SHORTS T' YOU?"

He stopped counting, and made as if he would take his money back, but Mr. Tumbleberry's fingers closed about his sixteen cents. Wolly-am took up the reins, clucked to his horse, and started slowly, paying no further attention to Mr. Tumbleberry.

That gentleman stood looking after him. "Eight cents!" he said contemptuously. "Sho! An' he'll sell 'em f'r fifty I think likely. Sho! He gits a dollar an' I git sixteen cents! What's he but a middleman, an' me th' producer? Did n't I produce them lobsters?"

Mr. Tumbleberry, with his hand in his pocket to comfort himself by feeling the mangled form of the third lobster, turned into his path toward home.

CHAPTER VIII

Mr. Chick was sweeping Jean Killian's walks. He was more industrious than usual, and he seemed to feel it necessary to put his whole mind on his work. He was very solemn, he did not look up, he had already swept the front walk from the gate to the house, the portion of the road which would have been the sidewalk if there had been any, the path around the side of the house, the path leading from the back door to the vegetable garden; and he had found himself furiously sweeping the dirt between the rows of vegetables. Thereupon he had exclaimed "Jumpin' Jiminy!", although no other evidence of emotion escaped him, had hastily retreated from the clouds of dust he had raised, and had begun again on the front walk. The gate clicked as he was thus engaged, and Jean appeared. Mr. Chick was well aware of her, but he did not look up.

She stopped just inside the gate. "Mercy, Chick!" she said. "Is it necessary to make such a lot of dirt? If you were less vigorous you'd do better."

Mr. Chick looked up at last. He seemed surprised. "'T is consid'rable dusty," he replied meekly. "I guess I wa' n't takin' notice to it."

"What in the world were you thinking of, Chick?"

He looked down again, and his broom began to move slowly. "Oh, nothin' much," he muttered,

"nothin' much, only somethin' 't happened yistiddy. 'T ain't any matter, but it don't seem right 't things 're as they be. 'T don't seem right."

Jean smiled a little, bitterly. "No, Chick, it does n't seem right sometimes."

"No, Jean," he said again, "sometimes it don't. 'T ain't fair."

"In general," Jean answered, "things are n't fair, but it does n't do to let ourselves dwell on it. Was it something in particular this time?"

Mr. William Druce had been coming along the road. He had overheard. He leaned on the fence and regarded Mr. Chick benevolently. "Out with it, Chick," he said. "Anything in particular? Russia or Ireland or any little thing like that, or was it Tum?"

Mr. Chick got red. "Hello, Billy," he said, glancing up for a moment, then looking down once more. "No, I wa' n't thinkin' o' Rooshia 'r anythin' so fur away, an' I would n't complain o' Tum. But right here in this village there's somethin' 't ain't right. Now, them lobster inspectors, they'll fasten on a man 't ain't done nothin', an' they won't listen t' reason, an' he ain't got no chancet. No chancet," he added vehemently, giving his broom a more vigorous flirt, and raising a little cloud of dust.

"Careful, Chick," said Jean.

"What?" asked the startled Mr. Chick. "Why —"

His eyes fell upon the smiling Drusilla, who had

come up silently and now stood leaning on the fence beside her brother.

She nodded to him. "Good-morning, Chick," she said.

"'Mornin', 'Silly," he replied faintly, preparing to teeter from one foot to the other.

"Now, Chick," she continued, "you're going to act like a rocking-horse again. Don't."

"I can't help it, 'Silly," he protested. "I try to, but I can't help it. You put me out so."

"Well, that is n't my fault," said Drusilla. "I don't try to. Now, Chick, did I understand you to intimate that you had been having some sort of a go at a lobster inspector? And you had no chance?"

"Did n't say nothin' o' th' sort," said Mr. Chick hastily. "I said 't them lobster inspectors did n't give a man no chancet. Women an' girls," he muttered darkly, "'s al'ays a-jumpin' at meanin's 'stid o' takin' notice t' what's said."

"We have to have some exercise," said Drusilla quickly, "and how else would we get it? But you should n't mutter, Chick, and you must n't run down women — and girls. It is n't safe. We have the vote now, remember. Besides, you could n't get along without them."

Mr. Chick shook his head. "Vote 'r no vote," he said, "'t wa'n't never safe. 'Jest 's safe now 's it ever was. But I wa'n't runnin' of 'em down, 'Silly. Y' know I would n't do that. I — I think too much of 'em."

"All of them, Chick? It seems to me that I have heard rumors."

Mr. Chick's face got fiery red, but he made no observation.

Drusilla waited for what she regarded as a reasonable time. "How did you get out of it, Chick?" she inquired innocently.

Mr. Chick was startled. "Git out of it!" he exclaimed. "I ain't a-tryin' t' git out of — Git out o' what, 'Silly?"

"*I* meant the trouble with the inspector," said Drusilla sweetly.

"Oh!" said Mr. Chick. "Well, I — he — th' lobsters," he began; then looked down and began again. "The' wa'n't no trouble with th' inspector. But I'm wonderin' how Tum ever come to let —"

At that moment the front door jerked open violently. It would have slammed if doors ever did slam open. A pointed beard and frowsy dark hair leaned out of the narrow opening, in the same violent motion. Mr. Killian's eyes snapped as he looked over the rims of his spectacles. A pleasing picture. It immediately reduced Mr. Chick to a trembling, impotent creature, meditating instant flight. Silence fell upon the group.

"Jean!" said Mr. Killian in a sharp voice which cut. "I ask that you will be so kind as to carry on your conversations with less hullabaloo. It is very disturbing — very."

Jean laughed a little, nervously, and tears came

to her eyes. She said nothing until she could control her voice. Then she spoke in the tone which, we are told, turneth away wrath. Usually it has the opposite effect.

"I'm sorry, father. I had no idea it would disturb you — a little talk and laughter. I should think you would like to hear it; that it would make you feel cheerful."

"*Cheerful!*" he snorted. "Like to hear it! Kind of you, your first thought always of me! Faugh! A little talk and laughter! Moderate your transports of merriment, if you will be so very good."

He was about to withdraw and close the door as violently as he had opened it, if less noiselessly.

"Good-morning, Mr. Killian," called Drusilla in her clear voice. "I was doing the talking, I am afraid. Scold me. I don't mind. It is a lovely day, I am feeling particularly cheerful, and I did n't know I was disturbing anybody. Will you accept my apology?"

Mr. Killian glanced hastily out again. He seemed embarrassed.

"Oh, good-morning," he muttered; and, still muttering, he dodged in, and shut the door with less of a slam than would have been expected.

Nobody spoke for a while. "I'm sorry, Jean," Drusilla said then.

"Oh, it does n't matter," said Jean bitterly. "Everybody knows. Father's always making me pleasant little speeches like that. He gives me a slam

whenever he can. What's the use of pretending it's all right when we all know it's all wrong? But sometimes it's hard to smile at it."

"He must be crazy — or worn out."

"I shall not defend him. I'm tired of doing it."

Jean stood silent, her hands clasped in front of her, and her gaze far away. After a little Drusilla and Will drifted off, with a word to her.

"Good-bye," said Jean. "I can't ask you to come again. It would always be as unpleasant as it was this morning."

"Oh, fudge!" cried Drusilla. "Of course we shall come again. Don't be a pessimist, Jean."

Mr. Chick had been struggling with his feelings for a long time, but no sound had issued from him. Jean turned to go into the house.

"Jean," he burst out, "if they was anythin' you wanted I sh'd do I'd be glad t' do it. Any arrants 'r anythin', 'eastcake 'r whatever, 'r washin' winders 'r cleanin' up, I wish 't y' 'd tell me. I'd be glad t' do anythin' f'r you, Jean."

Jean could not help laughing at his earnestness. "Thank you, Chick. I know you would. I shall call on you for whatever I want done. There's nothing now." She looked down the street. "There may be, though. Is n't that Flaherty? See if he has got two small lobsters — boiled. If he has I should like them."

"I'll get 'em f'r you." Mr. Chick bustled out into the road, and stood in the middle of it. Flaherty's

decrepit horse was in the far distance, coming slowly toward him. Although there was serious doubt whether Flaherty could see him at that distance, Mr. Chick waved his arms violently. He continued to wave while Flaherty and the horse drew near.

"What in time ails ye, Chick?" asked Wolly-am, pulling his horse in. "Ye got a fit, 'r doin' y'r daily dozen, 'r what? Ye ought to roll."

Mr. Chick was somewhat disconcerted by the scornful glance of the sharp old eyes under the bushy white eyebrows. "Nothin' o' th' sort," he said. "I was only aimin' t' stop you."

"Well, ye stopped me. What is it?"

"Miss Jean wants a couple o' nice lobsters," he said confidentially. "Little an' tender, if y' got 'em." Wolly-am was well-known as a purveyor of little and tender ones.

He drew from a basket between his feet two small lobsters. "There ye be," he said. "Just boiled this mornin'. I got 'em from Tumbleberry yesterday."

Mr. Chick's jaw dropped. "From Tum!" he said, looking up. He could not be sure whether there was a twinkle in those sharp eyes. "From Tum, did y' say?" There was growing anger in his voice. He took the lobsters and turned in toward Jean. "Ain't I never a-goin' t' be shet o' them lobsters?" he muttered.

"Are they fresh?" Jean asked of Wolly-am.

Mr. Chick answered for him. "Oh, they're fresh," he said in deep disgust. "Jest out o' th' pot yis-

tiddy, an' b'iled this mornin'. I s'pose y' want I sh'd shuck 'em f'r you. I'll jest step 'round t' th' kitchen an' git a plate."

So Mr. Killian and Jean lunched on lobster salad, and Chick was at last shet o' them lobsters. Mr. Killian's lunch was much better than he deserved, but it was eaten in silence so far as Jean was concerned. She answered his questions as briefly as possible, but to his pleasant little speeches — he never indulged in any other kind — she made no reply.

When lunch was over Mr. Killian dodged into his study again, and Jean, feeling blue and despairing, went out. She did not know where she was going. As she closed the front door softly she saw Madame Wadham, who waved to her, and she went over slowly.

Madame Wadham watched her come, and met her. "Jean, dear," she said, putting an arm across Jean's shoulders, "what's the matter?"

Jean was near crying. "The same old thing," she said. "Father's been unbearable. I'm very nearly at the breaking point."

Madame Wadham was looking at her compassionately, a spot of high color beginning to burn in each cheek. "And what will you do, dear, when you reach that point?"

Jean laughed nervously. "Break, I suppose. I don't know just what form it will take. I am disposed to go away — light out, as Will would say."

"Good!" cried Madame Wadham. "Good! The best thing in the world for you — and for him!"

"But how will he get along?"

"Oh, we shan't let him starve. It is to be hoped that he would come to his senses."

"The worst of it is," said Jean slowly, "that I am getting to the point where I should not care how he got along or what became of him. Awful, is n't it?"

"It is not to be wondered at. The surprising thing is that you have managed to hold out so long. And, Jean, dear, you must let me help. I am quite able to."

"Thank you, dear Madame Wadham. You would undertake any load cheerfully. But, you know, there is some property coming to me on my twenty-first birthday, my very own. It is not very much, but all I shall need, I think. It is only a few weeks to wait. I am afraid," she added, with a little laugh, "that father has forgotten about that."

"I hope he has," said Madame Wadham with satisfaction. "He has been outrageous to you, Jean, simply outrageous. You see I am vindictive. And if the property is not quite enough," she persisted, "you will let me help. No false modesty. Promise."

"I promise."

"Then that's settled — *if* you should be unable to stand it," said Madame Wadham gaily. "I'm not advising you one way or the other, but I can't see, for the life of me, how you can stand it. I know I

could n't. Now we'll say no more about it. Come around and see my flower garden, and advise me. It's hard to find flowers that bloom so late and are a satisfactory color. A magenta garden I will not have."

Mr. Chick had been more or less busy all day. He had to be busy a part of the time, at least, for he had responsibilities; not heavy, to be sure, but something. Mrs. Keep let him have an attic room in her large house — with board — for an absurdly small sum when you consider the quantity of food consumed by Mr. Chick. But Mrs. Keep did not know any better. And Clarissa, who ruled the kitchen, was very indulgent to Mr. Chick, who repaid them both by his never-failing good nature, and by doing all kinds of little chores. There are a great many chores, both great and small, to be done about a boarding-house.

Mr. Chick worked pretty steadily until five o'clock. As that witching hour approached he might have been observed to stop more and more often and to glance somewhat anxiously up the street. At last he saw three workmen emerge from a gate and move off, and he knew that it was five minutes of five. Those workmen were always very prompt, and we are led to believe that promptness is a commendable attribute. Mr. Chick put away the fork and shovel with which he had been turning up the soil, saw that everything was shipshape, and started home. As he approached that haven an expression of serenity

overspread his face, peace filled his being; and the nearer he got the more peaceful and serene he became. As he went in at the kitchen door he positively exuded happiness. Peace overflowed from him. Just inside the door he stopped in contemplation, and a beatific expression illumined his round, red countenance.

A woman was stooping before the oven door. She was of decidedly generous proportions, but not tall. Her sleeves, rolled up above her elbows, revealed powerful arms, and every movement indicated power. In fact, she was commonly known among the other boarders as Katrinka; but Mr. Chick resented the name.

"Hello, 'Rissa," said Mr. Chick in a voice which was almost a caress. "Can I wash at the sink?"

She turned a moment. Her face was not in any sense beautiful, but it was serene, unlined and pleasant. It was impossible to guess her age, but she was not old.

She smiled. "Of course you can, Chick. Just move the things if they're in your way. A little late to-night, are n't you?"

"Not more 'n five minutes," Mr. Chick answered, beginning to move some of the pots and pans out of the way of what Mrs. Keep called the facet.

Clarissa drew out of the oven a huge pan of steaming brown soda-biscuit, put them into the warming oven, and inserted in their place another huge pan of biscuit, yet to be baked.

"Well," she said, "five minutes is late for you. I could most generally set my clock by you."

Mr. Chick was bending over — as well as he could — and swashing his face liberally with water. Whether the glow on his face was the natural glow habitually adorning Mr. Chick's countenance, or whether it was due to this remark of Clarissa's, it is impossible to say.

He stopped his swashing, turned his dripping face toward her, and smiled bashfully and blissfully. "Sho!" he said.

Clarissa laughed out, a hearty contralto laugh. It was a pleasure to hear her laugh. She made no other reply, and Mr. Chick turned back, picked the laundry soap from the tray, and went at his hands. Getting his hands clean was more of an undertaking, but he did it. Then, without asking permission, he made for the roller towel, making a trail of drippings over the floor. Clarissa did not seem to mind.

Mr. Chick's round, red face emerged from the shelter of the towel.

"D' y' care 'f I stay here, Clarissa?" he asked anxiously.

"No," she said, "not if you don't get under foot, and you don't often. P'r'aps you can help."

Mr. Chick was ecstatic. "I wish 't I could. I'll do jest 's you say."

Again Clarissa laughed. "All right. If I want any thing I'll tell you."

So Mr. Chick effaced himself. Now and then

Clarissa held out toward him a dish or a pan, indicating by a nod or a word where it was to go, and he put it there. It was not the first time he had done this service, and for him this was supreme happiness. He carried into the dining-room all the cold dishes while Mrs. Keep was setting the table. She smiled at him without speaking. He returned to the kitchen and Clarissa put into his hands a great yellow bowl full of prunes.

"Must n't forget the prunes," she said, smiling. "Don't they always have prunes at boarding-houses?"

"I think prunes is great," said Mr. Chick loyally. "Anyway, yours is, 'Rissa." The other boarders seemed to think so too. Clarissa's prunes were different from the usual run of prunes, more like preserves.

"It all depends on how you cook 'em," replied Clarissa indifferently. "You be ready to take these beans when you've got rid of the prunes."

So, upon Mr. Chick's return, he found a great steaming pot of baked beans set in a plate on the kitchen table. He started to take it up, then hastily abandoned the intention.

"Jumpin' Jiminy!" he exploded. "That's hot. Say 'Rissa, ain't y' got a cloth I c'n use?"

"It's just out of the oven, tender-hands," Clarissa said. "Here, catch!" She tossed him the cloth she had been using. "You'll want the cloth for the Indian pudding, too."

After the beans and the Indian pudding, also in a great earthenware pot, there were the two plates heaped with flaky biscuit, which Mr. Chick put, one at each end of the table, and his duties were done. One would think it was time. This was supper, mind you. Mr. Chick would lose no weight while he boarded where Clarissa did the cooking. Mrs. Keep was ringing a brazen-throated bell, and Mr. Chick, reluctantly, it seemed, left the kitchen for the dining-room. Clarissa ate in the kitchen.

When Mr. Chick had consumed all the beans, Indian pudding, biscuit, prunes, with the "fixin's" of each, that he could manage, he pushed back his plate, sighed, and looked about. Most of the other boarders had already gone or were just going. All through supper he had not uttered a word, and he did not now, but leaned back in his chair. The last man got up and went out, the door into the kitchen opened, and Clarissa came in.

She smiled when she saw Mr. Chick. "Can't you move, Chick?" she asked. "You don't have to. Just sit there for a while. I'll do the dishes alone. They're no trouble."

Mrs. Keep got up from her chair. She also smiled at Mr. Chick.

"Guess he don't have to set no more, Clarissa," she said. "He'll want to help you, I'll be bound. Won't you, Chick?"

"'Course I will," answered Mr. Chick with alacrity. "Only trouble is, Mis' Keep, y' feed us so well

't I can't hardly move. Them beans, now, an' that Injun puddin', an' them biscuits, was awful good, but kind o' fillin', an' prunes like those don't help me none — movin', I mean. Now, don't y' do nothin'. I'll clear th' table, same 's I al'ays do, an' 'Rissa 'n' me'll wash th' dishes."

"Well," Mrs. Keep said, "I'll go 'long, then, ontil you got the dishes out o' the way."

Mrs. Keep went out, and Clarissa went into the kitchen with a huge armful of dishes, which she deposited, and began upon the pots and pans. There were not many. Meanwhile Mr. Chick had got up, and begun collecting plates. It seemed as if there were a great many of these. He made repeated journeys to the kitchen, scraped the plates — when they needed it — and piled them up. He took out the remaining beans and Indian pudding and prunes. There were but two of the biscuit left. It seemed a pity to Mr. Chick to go to the trouble of putting two biscuit away, and he ate them. He put his last armful of dishes on the pile.

"That's all, 'Rissa," he said. "I'll take them pans out o' y'r way."

"All right, Chick," Clarissa answered cheerfully. "You know where they belong, but don't bother to hang them up. I'll have these dishes coming along in a second."

A fresh lot of hot water, rapid swishes of the soap shaker, and the dishes began to come along. Mr. Chick wiped in silence, his lips pursed and a deep

frown on his face. The operation took all his attention, but even so he could not keep up with Clarissa. Faster and faster came the dishes, deeper and deeper grew the frown on Mr. Chick's face. The perspiration started, gathered, slowly rolled down his face and dropped off his chin and the end of his nose. At that Mr. Chick gave up.

"'T ain't no use, 'Rissa," he said. "Y' know y' got m' beat 'f y' a min' t' hurry. I ain't a-goin' t' try no more."

Clarissa laughed pleasantly, looking around at him. "If you could only see yourself, Chick!" she said. "But I'm sorry. I was just trying you to see how fast you could go. Now I'm through here and I'll wipe the rest. You'll want to wash your face. Then you go outside. I'll be out in a jiffy, as soon as I get red up in here. You've done enough."

Clarissa Sharp was some poor relation of Mrs. Keep's. Mr. Chick knew nothing of her history except that she had been through High School, then had been the victim of misfortune, then had appeared from nowhere at Mrs. Keep's. Mrs. Keep had been glad to get her, as well she might be. Clarissa had great talent — and great love — for cooking, she had been there for more than ten years, and she seemed likely to stay indefinitely. It was just beginning to dawn on Mr. Chick — but not consciously — that some other arrangement was a remote possibility. Clarissa was such a cook and such a worker — and so many men liked just those qual-

ities in wives! And she was so pleasant! As for her figure, — well, it always aroused Mr. Chick's anger to hear anybody make fun of her figure, which was not infrequently the case — her figure pleased Mr. Chick well enough. As this thought passed through his mind he rattled the chairs he was arranging just outside the kitchen door. There were two chairs, and they were large and strong. At the rattling, as if it were a signal, Clarissa came out, giving her hands a last wipe on her apron.

"Don't get impatient, Chick," said she. "I was coming in a jiffy. I have n't kept you waiting more than five minutes."

Mr. Chick turned toward her and beamed, but said nothing, and they sat down in the strong, large chairs. It was not quite dark yet, and they were facing the west and the harbor, and there was nothing to interfere with the view. These were the happiest moments of Mr. Chick's day. And they sat there and watched the daylight fade, and the night fall, and Mr. Chick's soul swam in bliss.

CHAPTER IX

SNAPPERS — young bluefish — were running up the harbor and into the broad stretch of backwater above the bridge. There were many fishing for them from the bridge. The tide runs here very strongly, and it was only necessary for the fishermen to stand by the railing, or to sit on a load of lumber which had been dumped providentially at the very spot most convenient for their comfort, and to cast out their lines. The strong tide kept the lines clear of the bridge. In the water below was a small flotilla of skiffs and dories, fast to the bridge or anchored, and all of their occupants were fishing, some with two or three lines.

Mr. Tumbleberry reclined comfortably on the pile of lumber, leaning on one elbow, and his long legs reaching nearly to the flooring of the bridge. Beside him sat Mr. Chick, redder of face than usual. Mr. Chick sat upright. It was difficult for him to assume a reclining posture, which was no manner of rest to him. Moreover, he seemed to be laboring under some excitement. His thoughts were evidently far away, his mind was not on his fishing, and his line swung out motionless. Mr. Tumbleberry glanced at him now and then, while he sawed his own line back and forth in the water.

"What ails ye, Chick?" he boomed at last.

"They's somethin' 'r another preyin' on y'r mind. Well, they's one thing," he observed, having waited for a decent interval for a reply which did not come. "'F y' was t' go an' have a stroke right here an' now, they's consider'ble many folks 't 'd know more about what's the right thing t' do f'r you 'n what I would. An' y' would n't fall int' no water 'n' git drownded. I sh'd think that 'd be a comfort. I ain't never cared 'bout gittin' drownded. It's stranglin' t' death, that's jest what 't is. Death by stranglin' don't hit me, somehow. 'Might 's well be hung an' be done 'th it."

Mr. Chick had been paying little attention, but at this he turned a startled face toward Mr. Tumbleberry. "What 'y' mean, Tum? I ain't no idea o' gittin' hung."

"Might 's well be hung 's t' be drownded," Mr. Tumbleberry rumbled cheerfully. "'N' if you 's t' be hung, might 's well turn y'rself loose an' do some damage first. Come t' think of it, y' better. Th' don't hang people 'n this state, an' I understan' 't this here 'lectric chair's painless, 'n' y' don't know nothin' about it 'ntil 't 's all done an' over with, an' then y' don't care. Yes, Chick, th' 's two 'r three 'r mebbe more o' these lollipops aroun' here 't I 'd make away with 'f I knew 't I 's t' be drownded th' next minute. An' I would n't handle 'em none too gentle neither."

"Who d' y' have reference to?" Mr. Chick asked mildly. "Me?"

Mr. Tumbleberry considered. "No, Chick," he replied at last, "I don' know 's y' d'serve any worse 'n y' 're a-gittin'. I would n't go an' rub it in on you. Y' can't help it, an' y' mean well. I would n't —"

"Well," Mr. Chick interrupted with some asperity, "'f y' was t' go an' tackle George 'r Arthur 'r any other o' that gang that's al'ays roastin' y' t' death y' 'd never live t' be drownded."

"No, Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry returned with much patience, by the gentle boom of his voice attracting the attention of all those fishing by the rail, "'t 's jest what I 's a-sayin'. Did n't y' hear me passin' them remarks about th' 'lectric chair? I 'xpect 't I'd be took up right off so 't I would n't have no chancet t' git drownded." Mr. Tumbleberry slowly turned his head and regarded Mr. Chick. "Ain't y' feelin' right, Chick, 'r what is it? 'F y' was t' ask me I sh'd say 't y' better be careful an' not git excited. 'T ain't safe f'r a man 'f your build t' git excited. Now we ain't neither of us ketched anythin' yet, an' them bo'ts down there's haulin' of 'em in han' over fist. I see 'em a-doin' of it 'fore I laid here, an' I hear 'em now. An' look at th' fellers by th' rail."

Mr. Chick grunted.

"I guess we ain't got th' right bait," Mr. Tumbleberry continued. "We'd ought t' 'a' had minnies 'stid o' clams. Why 'n't y' git minnies, Chick?"

"They's good clams," Mr. Chick objected.

"I see some minnies yist'day," Mr. Tumbleberry observed thoughtfully, "in a pool o' water in back o' th' beach. Th' pool was thick with 'em. I could 'a' got a mess of 'em easy 'f I'd 'a' had a dip net an' somethin' t' carry 'em in, an' I'd 'a' done it cheerful'."

"Well," asked Mr. Chick impatiently, "why in tarnation did n't y' git 'em, Tum? Y' could 'a' borryed a dip net easy 'nough, 'r a basket 'd 'a' done jest 's well an' y' c'd 'a' carried 'em in it too."

"They wa'n't nothin' handy, Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry replied with dignity, "an' I'd 'a' had t' walk all the ways there an' back, an' carry th' basket o' minnies int' th' bargain. An' I reelied on y'r gittin' some."

"Y' 'd ought t' have an automobeel t' carry you aroun'," growled Mr. Chick.

No effective reply occurred to Mr. Tumbleberry. "Jest take a double-han'ful o' clams, Chick," he said, changing to a less awkward subject, "an' see 'f y' can't find somebody 't 'll give y' a han'ful o' minnies f'r 'em. 'T won't do no harm t' try. 'F I was you," he suggested, "I'd try Bill East first off. He's a little ways up th' rail. He's got a whole lot o' minnies. Y' c'n see 'em from here."

Mr. Chick turned his face toward Mr. Tumbleberry. The red was beginning to surge into it. "Why 'n't y' ask him y'rself?"

"Oh, all right," Mr. Tumbleberry rumbled pleasantly. "I'll ask him cheerful'. You're so ever-

lastin' techy, Chick. I would n't go an' git mad 'f I 's you. Oh, Bill!" he roared. "Bill East!"

The man addressed turned. So did everybody else. East smiled and waited.

"Say, Bill," Mr. Tumbleberry boomed, "trade me some minnies f'r some clams, will you?"

East looked down at his basket, then looked up and nodded.

"I got plenty, and they're plenty o' snappers. Match clam f'r minnie, Tum."

"Thank y', Bill. I'll do it." Mr. Tumbleberry addressed Mr. Chick once more. "I knew he'd trade. Jest take all y' c'n carry, Chick, an' git minnies f'r 'em, an' p'r'aps our luck 'll turn."

Mr. Chick sighed, but departed on his errand. He returned with some shining minnows, but fewer than Mr. Tumbleberry had hoped for.

"Is that all y' got?" asked Mr. Tumbleberry, bending over to inspect them. "Could n't y' git no more 'n that?"

"No, I could n't," snapped Mr. Chick, evidently feeling anything but conciliatory. "Y' 'd ought t' 'gone y'rself. Mebbe y' could 'a' got all his minnies an' brought back th' clams int' th' bargain."

Mr. Tumbleberry shook his head. "Y' are so everlastin' techy, Chick. I'm real worried about y' f'r fear y' 'll go an' have a stroke. It's a' right. I wa'n't findin' no fault. Now bait up an' forgit it. That's what I sh'd do 'f I 's you. I'll give y' first ch'ice."

"Huh!" muttered Mr. Chick. "Considerin' they's my clams an' 't I got th' minnies!"

"Well," observed Mr. Tumbleberry, taking a minnow, "I made th' trade, did n't I?" He skilfully impaled the minnow so that his tail would waggle in the current. The operation was painless for the minnow, for he was dead already. With a sweep of his long arm Mr. Tumbleberry flung his hook and sinker far out over the rail. It fell with a thud and a rattle, and immediately a roar came up.

"Must 'a' landed int' one o' th' bo'ts," Mr. Tumbleberry remarked calmly. "Jest take a look over the rail, will y', Chick? I don' want them fellers a-stealin' my minnies. I can't see nothin' of it from where I be. They 'd ought t' throw my hook overboard."

Mr. Chick silently removed himself from the pile of lumber, took a few minnows, and took his place by the rail. The men in the boat below had not thrown Mr. Tumbleberry's hook overboard, but had made the line fast instead. Mr. Chick baited his hook and threw it over. From his height above the water he could see the snappers, a steady stream of them, passing up with the current. They seemed to be less than a foot below the surface, and he watched individuals of the stream as they paused to investigate his minnow. Presently one did not pause, but took the minnow savagely. Bluefish of all ages are savage killers, swift and vigorous swimmers, which prefer their prey alive.

Mr. Chick with difficulty stifled a shrill shout, and gave a jerk with all the force in his short arm. It was enough to yank the bluefish almost clear of the water. A man in the boat below looked up, grinning, and gave a jerk to Mr. Tumbleberry's line; a fairly hard yank, followed immediately by a short series of trembling tugs.

"Hey, Chick!" Mr. Tumbleberry bellowed. "I got one!" He gave a tentative pull on his line. "That wa' n't no snapper," he said disgustedly. "My line all clear, Chick?"

The man in the boat had quickly cast off his line and thrown hook, bait and sinker overboard. Mr. Chick made no reply. He did not hear the question. His own fish was half way up to the bridge. Mr. Tumbleberry, finding his line satisfactorily disposed, relapsed into silence.

Thereafter both Mr. Tumbleberry and Mr. Chick caught snappers, much to their satisfaction. Mr. Chick, indeed, was conscious of nothing but his minnows, his line and the stream of snappers. At last his supply of minnows was gone, and he went back to the pile of lumber. He found Mr. Tumbleberry lying back, his hands under his head, and eight young bluefish beside him. There were no minnows.

"What y' done 'th th' minnies, Tum? Y' ain't gone an' used 'em all!" Mr. Chick's voice was shrill with emotion.

"Th' ain't no more," Mr. Tumbleberry replied

soothingly. "Not ary one. I got my line over with a piece o' clam onto it, but it's only f'r luck. I ain't expectin' nothin'. We got enough, anyway. I been thinkin', Chick, an' I got an idea. Set up here alongside o' me, an' I'll tell y' about it. It's an idea that's got a good bottom to it."

"Well," said Mr. Chick reluctantly. "I got t' git m' line an' m' fish. But I wish 't they was more minnies. I c'd 'a' ketched —"

"You one o' these 'ere game-hawgs, Chick?" Mr. Tumbleberry interrupted. "They's some folks 't never knows when they've got 'nough. Now, snappers, they's more been ketched 'n th' whole village c'n eat 'fore they sp'ile so bad 't they ain't nobody got a stummick strong 'nough t' eat 'em. Y' can't eat no more 'n you've ketched, 'n' I can't eat no more 'n what I've ketched, an' y' could n't give 'em away. Y' 'd ought t' have a photographt took 'f y'rself stan'in' in front of y'r snappers hung on a line 's if th' was th' wash, an' a label onto it sayin' 't 't was our steamed feller citizen an' fisherman, Mr. Chick, a reg'lar Ike Waldron, 'th 'is famous ketch o' snappers. An' y' ought t' have one o' them photographts stuck up in th' postoffice. Then y' 'd be notorious, Chick. You git y'r fish," Mr. Tumbleberry concluded, "an' come an' set up here. They ain't no hurry, Chick. Any time'll do."

"'Course I ain't a-goin' t' have no photographt took," muttered Mr. Chick. "Y' 'd ought t' know better, Tum."

Mr. Chick settled himself on the pile of lumber, his fish beside him, and began reeling up his line carefully. Mr. Tumbleberry said nothing for some time, but continued to regard the little clouds thoughtfully from under the brim of his hat.

"I tell ye, Chick," he boomed at last, "'t seems t' me 't they's boun' t' be money in a partnership, 'r a corp'ration or whatever, 'f it's done right."

"Huh!" Mr. Chick grunted. Mr. Tumbleberry's arrangements of this nature had not proved to be profitable in the past.

"Call it an agency 'f y' 'd rather," Mr. Tumbleberry conceded graciously. "I ain't no 'bjection. Tumbleberry and Chick, Agents. It has a fetchin' sound. Why, th' name 'd be wuth money."

"Uh-huh," said Mr. Chick cautiously. "What 'd we be agents for, Tum?"

"'Most anythin' 't come along. F'r one thing, y' know th' farmers in these parts 's been givin' up farmin', one after another, an' it's got so now 't nobody can't git nothin' done when he wants it. Now, we might und'take t' do a man's job when he wants it done. They's a lot o' gardens t' be ploughed in th' fall an' spring, an' they's hayin' in the season."

"Ha!" It made Mr. Chick laugh to think of Mr. Tumbleberry doing a man's job when he wanted it done. And ploughing and haying! "*Who* 'd do all this ploughin' an' hayin'? Me?"

"I sh'd aim t' do my share," Mr. Tumbleberry replied with dignity. "I al'ays aim t' do —"

"An' what 'd we do it with?" Mr. Chick interrupted. "I ain't got any hosses an' ploughs an' mowin' machines, an' you ain't."

"Borry 'em," said Mr. Tumbleberry promptly. "Can't we borry th' ploughs an' harrers an' mowin' machines 't ain't used no more?"

"No," said Mr. Chick, "we can't."

"An' then," Mr. Tumbleberry pursued, "they 's chickens. Chickens — good br'ilers — is high, an' eggs 's a dollar a dozen las' winter, an' I ain't had a chicken nor an egg since I c'n remember. Keepin' chickens, now, looks good t' me. Chickens does all th' work, an' they lots o' bugs an' grasshoppers."

"I ain't never seen many o' y'r bugs an' grasshoppers in winter," Mr. Chick observed, "an' chickens does all th' work 'xcept cleanin' out th' houses, an' keepin' of 'em warm an' feedin' of 'em in winter, an' gettin' of 'em well when they 's sick, an' they most gin'r'lly is. You ever took care o' chickens, Tum?"

"Well, no," Mr. Tumbleberry rumbled, "I ain't, not t' say act'ly took *care* of 'em, but I've see it done a plenty o' times."

"I've took care of 'em," said Mr. Chick grimly, "an' I've see big flocks took care of, an' I don't want none 'f it. 'N one o' them big chicken farms I've see bushel baskets o' dead chicks took out every mornin', *bushel baskets* of 'em, Tum, little chicks 'bout 's big 's a baby's fist. An' th' skunks gets an awful lot, an' th' rats too, an' eggs 't ain't 'n

th' incoobaters. Skunks an' rats jest nat'rally gethers 'n a chicken farm, so 's what y' have 's a skunk farm th' fust thing y' know. I don't want none 'f it. A dozen hens is well 'nough, but what good would that be?"

"Rats is mean kind o' animals," said Mr. Tumbleberry thoughtfully, "an' they ain't nothin' for 'em but ketchin' 'em 'r shootin' of 'em. Shootin' of 'em ain't bad sport 'f y' don't have t' do too much 'f it. Shootin' 's kind o' tirin' 'f the gun 's heavy, but mebbe they 's use f'r th' skins an' y' might sell 'em. But skunks, now, 's a p'int 't I've give consid'rable thought to. Skunk skins 's valu'ble, Chick, say a dollar y' c'n git f'r a skunk skin. 'F we 's t' have a chicken farm, 'n' th' skunks got thick, we'd make on th' skunk skins. 'F th' chickens growed we'd make on th' chickens. Cuts f'r us any way y' look at it, 't seems t' me. Skunks 's easy ketched. I've ketched lots of 'em."

"Huh!" said Mr. Chick. "So've I. But who'd skin 'em an' cure th' skins? Tell m' that. Me?"

"That 's a p'int 't c'd b' arranged," Mr. Tumbleberry answered judicially. "I'd guarantee t' do it t' y'r satisfaction. I know a place, th' side-hill right over 'crost th' harbor, all growed up 'th berry bushes, an' rocky 's Sam Hill. Th' skunks 's thick there now, an' 't ain't fit f'r nothin' else. We c'd go an' inspect it, an' mebbe y' c'd git an option on it."

Mr. Chick shook his head decidedly. "No," he said. "I don't want no part o' no skunk farm, n'r no

part o' no chicken farm neither. I'm doin' well 'nough 's I be."

Mr. Tumbleberry sighed patiently. "Th' trouble 'th you, Chick, 's 't y' ain't got no ambition. But 'f y' say 't don't hit y'r jedgment, 't can't be done. Come t' think 'f it, I do' know 's it 'd be wuth while anyways, they 's so much work into it. An' th' ploughin' an' hayin' — we c'd und'take t' do them by han', but that ain't no settin'-down job, like a mowin' machine, 'r a disk-harrer, 'r one o' these here settin'-down ploughs. No, Chick, I guess we 'better give up on them kind of notions. Keepin' a dozen hens 'r so kind o' fetches me. They'd give us eggs an' a chicken 't odd times."

Mr. Tumbleberry waited hopefully, but his hopes were dashed.

"No," said Mr. Chick briefly.

"Mebbe 't would n't be wuth while," Mr. Tumbleberry assented cheerfully. "No, Chick, I guess y' 're right. 'T would add t' m' responsibilities more 'n I feel like und'takin'. I'll tell y', though," he continued, taking a fresh start, "what 't was 't made me go on thinkin' o' them kind o' things. I 's down t' th' relro'd depot yist'day."

Mr. Chick was alert and alive at once. "T' th' city, Tum?" he asked, turning to Mr. Tumbleberry. "What y' doin' there, Tum? What 'd y' go t' th' depot for?"

"I had some business," Mr. Tumbleberry replied importantly, "t' 'tend to."

"Sho!" murmured Mr. Chick.

"I see Bill Druce a-gittin' int' th' train f'r Boston," Mr. Tumbleberry continued, "but he did n't see me, me bein' behin' 'im an' a gal waitin' f'r 'im 't th' top o' th' steps."

"Who 's th' gal?" Mr. Chick inquired. "Was it 'Silly? 'R most likely 't was Jean."

"'T wa' n't neither one of 'em," said Mr. Tumbleberry. "'T wa' n't nobody I ever see before."

"What 's she like?"

"Rich," Mr. Tumbleberry replied succinctly. "Rich 's writ all over 'er. But she 's pretty too — a han'some gal sh' was — an' she smiled at Bill gentle, an' called 'im Will 'n a soft, lovin' voice, an' he called 'er Mary. You know who 't was, Chick?"

"Mary Gair," said Mr. Chick.

"Th' rich Gair over 't th' city, eh?" Mr. Tumbleberry observed. "How d' y' know, Chick?"

"'Rissa tells m' 't Bill 's been goin' 'th 'er f'r quite a spell."

"Mary an' 'Rissa," Mr. Tumbleberry boomed thoughtfully. "Mary an' 'Rissa an' Bill an' Chick. Put two an' two together, Chick, an' y' git two pair. Well, seein' Bill an' Mary put me 'n mind o' this here agency. How 'd a weddin' agency hit y'r jedgment — a matereemonial agency?"

Mr. Chick's face had been getting redder and redder, and now it was like fire.

"Weddin' agency," he began, trying to cover his confusion. "How in time d' y' figger they 's money

into that, Tum? Y' could n't git no money out o' Bill f'r meddlin' 'th him."

"No, y' could n't, not wuth mentionin'," Mr. Tumbleberry acknowledged. "Y' 'd git somethin' else, I think likely. But this here matereemonial agency 's like an employment agency. Folks 't wants t' git married, an' ain't got th' man 'r th' gal, leaves their names an' where they live, an' th' money they're makin', an' their trade, an' whatever. Then they pay th' fee-money f'r that, an' has a photographt took, an' we git that."

"What d' y' want of a photographt o' the darn fool?" growled Mr. Chick.

"We don't want it, Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry explained patiently, "but 't 's needful in th' business. Y' got t' show people what their partners 's a-goin' t' look like 'r they might match up wrong. Th' agency does th' matchin', an' if they 's a weddin' they 's another cash fee, bigger 'n th' fust."

"I don't see —" Mr. Chick began.

"Well, Chick," said Mr. Tumbleberry in a calm bass, "mebbe 'f I 'lustrate with an 'xample y' 'll see better. S'pose you want t' git married, an' can't think where y' 'll find y' a woman 't 'll have you, 'count o' y'r figger bein' what 't is. Y' come t' me, an' you register 's Chick, an' say 't you're a common laborer by th' hour." Mr. Chick muttered something in an unintelligible growl. "Don't y' go an' git mad, Chick. I'm only usin' you 's an 'xample. An' y' say y' 're a-gittin' — how much should y' say

you're a-gittin' by th' hour? Well, ne' min', Chick, it don't matter a mite, but you give me a figger f'r it. Then y' go an' git y'r photographt took. I sh'd think y' could manage it 'f it's to be th' wide way o' th' card 'crost you. An' y' turn in y'r photographt an' pay y'r five dollars, an' th' agency does the rest."

"Why do I have t' pay y' five dollars?" Mr. Chick objected.

"F'r takin' all them things down, an' matchin' you up with a woman," said Mr. Tumbleberry. "Now s'pose Clarissy Sharp was registered" — an ominous growl from Mr. Chick, to which Mr. Tumbleberry paid no attention — "as cook, an' a good one, workin' sixteen hours a day, mebbe more, an' makin' whatever she does make. We'd draw out 'er photographt, an' we'd see 't it was took the wide way o' th' card, same 's yours. So we'd give it t' you, an' we'd give 'er yours, an' we'd 'range f'r you two t' come together, an' I'll bet," concluded Mr. Tumbleberry, "'t it would n't be no time 'fore they 'd be a weddin', an' they'd be another fee — mebbe twenty 'r thutty dollars. An' they would n't be no expenses f'r th' agency, not hardly. Now y' see, Chick. I ain't askin' you t' give me y'r jedgment on it right slap off, but you sleep on it, an' then see 'f they ain't somethin' into it."

Mr. Chick's face was very red, and it was not with anger. He got down off the pile of lumber and gathered up his snappers.

"I got t' go, Tum," he said. "It's 'most dinner time."

"Well, y' give me y'r jedgment on this here agency," Mr. Tumbleberry called after him. "They ain't no hurry, Chick. Any time 'll do."

Mr. Chick was very thoughtful as he walked slowly homeward. The red had not faded from his cheeks as he entered the kitchen door. Clarissa was busy getting dinner.

"'Rissa," said Mr. Chick shyly, "don't y' want these 'ere snappers f'r dinner? 'R mebbe y' got dinner a'ready, an' c'd use 'em f'r supper?"

Clarissa lifted a flushed face, looked at Mr. Chick, and laughed her hearty contralto laugh.

"The whole town has been catching them this morning," she said. "Just look here." And she went to the table and raised a towel, disclosing a huge pile of fish, all cleaned and ready for broiling. Clarissa disdained a frying pan for such fish.

"Sho!" said the crestfallen Mr. Chick. "I don' know what I'll do with 'em 'less I throw 'em out."

"Oh, there must be somebody—" Clarissa thought for a moment. "Do you suppose, Chick, that Mrs. Wadham would like some? Why not take her a couple?"

Mr. Chick beamed. "I'll do it right after dinner. 'T takes you, 'Rissa, t' think o' things." A sudden thought occurred to him. "Who cleaned them fish?" he asked with a hint of challenge.

"Why, I did. It was no trouble, Chick. Don't you get peeved."

"Well," said Mr. Chick, "y' had n't ought t' 'a' done it, 'Rissa. I aim t' do all them kind o' chores f'r you."

Clarissa was attending to her business all this time. "You were n't home, Chick. I'm not taking your chores away from you. Don't you worry."

As soon as he had somewhat recovered from the exertion of eating his dinner, Mr. Chick selected three of the best of his snappers, cleaned them, and pegged happily away to Madame Wadham's. She was grateful for them, and appreciative; and did not diminish his happiness by offering to pay for them. She did get him to cut the lawn, however.

When Mr. Chick came back from the shed with the lawn mower, he heard a familiar voice from the back of the Killian house. There was no mistaking that voice. It was Mr. Tumbleberry's.

Presently it came again. "Oh, yes, they's fresh 's a lily," Mr. Tumbleberry boomed. "Ketched this mornin' right out o' th' harbor. No, they 's easy t' clean. Anybody c'd do it. I'd do it f'r you cheerful', but I ain't got time this afternoon. Thank y', Jean."

Mr. Chick stopped and glared at the Killian house. "Huh! Could n't give snappers away! An' they ain't cleaned int' th' bargain. Huh!"

Mr. Tumbleberry, shambling loosely out of the Killians' yard, saw Mr. Chick, across the street, glaring at him fiercely.

"Hello, Chick," he said. "Come on. Goin' down t' th' wharf? I thought I'd take me a little sail in my vessel 'r bo't. She don't leak none wuth mentionin'. Come on."

"No," replied Mr. Chick, "I ain't a-comin' on. How many snappers y' been a-sellin' t' Jean?"

"Why," said Mr. Tumbleberry in his rumbling bass, "I found 't I c'd let her have a couple. That'll leave me a plenty."

"An' how much," pursued Mr. Chick, "did y' git f'r 'em?"

"A quarter," Mr. Tumbleberry answered. "A quarter she give me."

"Apiece?"

"'D y' think 't was a quarter a dozen?" Mr. Tumbleberry inquired. "Now that ain't in reason, Chick. Y' had n't ought t' be onreasonable."

"Huh!" said Mr. Chick, turning to his lawn mower. "A quarter apiece an' they not cleaned! Y' better go 'long, Tum, 'r y' 'll be late."

The lawn mower gave out a shriller whine than usual. Mr. Tumbleberry stood gazing across, for a moment, at the lawn mower and Mr. Chick's legs twinkling after it. Then he shook his head and shambled off.

"Half a dollar an' they not cleaned!" muttered Mr. Chick. "I'll have t' clean 'em f'r Jean. Mis' Wadham won't mind." And he left the lawn mower where it was, and twinkled across the street.

CHAPTER X

As September merged into October, Mr. Tumbleberry began to lose his careless ease. There were many mellow, lovely days in October, when it was warm on the water, the shores were bathed in a luminous, golden haze, and he forgot and was tempted out in his "vessel," to drift about the surface of the harbor, his hat over his eyes and his long legs stretched out on the thwarts. But there were some days of storm, and some days of high northwest winds, no haze, when one could see great distances on the water with absolute clearness. Such days held a sting in the air.

"Well, Chick," said Mr. Tumbleberry on one such day, after a day of cold rain, "I guess I'll have to be haulin' my bo't up, I should n't wonder a mite. It's consid'rable trouble an' labor."

"'F y' leave 'er where she is," answered Mr. Chick heartlessly, "y' won't have no trouble 'r labor. Y' 'll see 'n th' paper, some mornin', 't th' good ship Sieve has sunk 't her dock. Crew saved. Th' won't no ice tech 'er, an' mebbe by spring she'll 'a' swelled up some o' them cracks."

Mr. Tumbleberry considered this suggestion. "No, Chick," he said at last. "'T won't do her no good t' leave her where she is. I guess we'll have t' haul 'er up."

Mr. Chick was not especially interested. He could not be induced to venture out again in Mr. Tumbleberry's vessel, but he was willing enough to converse about her.

"Where y' haulin' out, Tum?" he asked.

"On th' beach 'longside o' my house," Mr. Tumbleberry replied. "I'll make me a place f'r 'er an' haul 'er out fust thing y' know. Mebbe I'll haul 'er out to-morrer 'f it keeps cold. They ain't no plaisure 'n sailin' 'th y'r teeth rattlin' 's if 't was a minstrel show."

He had not done it when November came, although there was but five minutes' work involved, for Mr. Chick would have nothing to do with it. He lost his careless ease entirely and took on a resigned air, and he was oppressed by that melancholy which occasionally attacks us all at that season. But Mr. Tumbleberry had reason. Winter was coming, and a person cannot expect to be warm and comfortable in winter; cannot expect to be anything but uncomfortable if he escapes actual suffering, and Mr. Tumbleberry did not always succeed in that. He did not find the prospect exhilarating. He hated cold. He hated it more every winter. Perhaps he had reason for that too. Many a morning he found the ground covered with frost, and on several mornings, being driven forth early by hunger, he found the little pools skimmed with ice, and the water in front of his house, as he dabbled his hands in it, was cold enough to send through him a chill from which

he did not recover for hours. No doubt he would have approved the old Connecticut law which made it a misdemeanor for a person to take a bath between October and March. Mr. Tumbleberry would have been safe. So far as he was concerned the period might have been extended. But his pile of driftwood was growing, and he banked up around his house with sand and earth. He hated the labor of it, but it was a choice of evils; and Chick was not on hand to do it for him, and it was getting perilously near Thanksgiving, and the sand and earth might freeze up at any minute. As it was, Mr. Tumbleberry had spent a cold and uncomfortable night. His boat was on the beach, a few feet away. Some unknown friend, not wishing that she should become an obstruction to navigation, had towed her over during the night.

Mr. Chick was plodding happily up to Jean's to do the same office of banking up for her. Mr. Killian insisted upon it. Banking up with leaves and earth to the top of the foundation saved a deal of coal, especially when the leaves are safeguarded from the winds of winter by planks. There was a good deal of work in it, for the Killians' house was not small. Mr. Chick, arrived, stood contemplating his problem. There was the pile of leaves in the back yard, collected through the fall for this purpose, and the pile of earth, also for this purpose. Mr. Chick's mind was not quick in its operation; not nearly as quick as Mr. Tumbleberry's. He needed to con-

template any problem, to think out his plan of work. Even with thinking his plan was apt to be faulty.

While he stood there, contemplating the expanse of painted brick foundation, he heard voices. To be strictly truthful it should be said that he heard a voice. He was standing near a window of Mr. Killian's study, and the voice was Mr. Killian's. It was unmistakable, that hard, sharp voice, speaking in that measured tone which he habitually employed when he wished to be particularly disagreeable. Mr. Chick could not distinguish the words, but he did not need to, to know that it was being made as unpleasant for Jean as her father knew how to make it. Jean's replies, if she made any, were inaudible. As Mr. Chick stood there, trying to distinguish the words, his color rose, and his fists clenched. Presently the sound of the voice ceased, and a door slammed. Mr. Chick stood for some time, listening for a renewal of the sound of the voice and glaring at the painted brick foundation; but gradually the foundation became more and more absorbing, he forgot the voice, and he was lost in his plan.

There would be needed the wheelbarrow and various tools to go on with the work, and Mr. Chick went around to the back of the house to get them. There he found Jean. She was leaning against the barn, apparently doing nothing, which was not like her. On coming near, Mr. Chick saw that her face was pale and set, and that there were tears in her

eyes. She was not crying, although from the way the muscles in her throat were working it was evident that she was very near it.

Mr. Chick stopped, ready for instant flight, but Jean had seen him. She nodded, and would have spoken, but was not able to for a moment. She waited, swallowed again, and composed herself.

"Chick," she said then in a voice which was not quite steady, "you may go on with the work that you were expecting to do this morning, but you had better not come back after that until you are sent for."

His surprise was evident. "Why, Jean," he said, "y' know I can't finish th' bankin' up 'n a mornin'. Don't y' want I sh'd do th' job complete?"

"To tell the truth," she said, "it makes very little difference to me. I will pay you for your morning's work."

"Sho!" said Mr. Chick sheepishly. "'T don't make no diff'rence. Y' need n't to 'nless y' want to. They ain't no hurry."

"I think I'd better. I'm going away this afternoon."

"Sho!" Understanding began to dawn on Mr. Chick. His face lighted, and he jerked his head backward. "Does he know?"

"Not yet. I'd rather you would n't say anything about it."

"Not me. *I* won't say nothin'." A smile gradually spread over Mr. Chick's features. "Jumpin'

Jiminy!" he remarked. "I say, Jean, 'f they 's anythin' 't I c'n do, I sh'd be glad t' do it. Anythin' short o' tellin' him 'r soothin' him, I'd be glad to."

Jean laughed. "Thank you, Chick. I think there's nothing."

"Well," said Mr. Chick wistfully, "I wish 't they was."

Jean paid him and disappeared into the house. Mr. Chick got his wheelbarrow and tools, and thereafter was very busy with the leaves. Throughout the morning he alternated between chuckles and looking scared, at intervals breaking out with "Jumpin' Jiminy!"

As for Jean, with the air of a Spartan mother, she had dragged forth her trunk from the attic and had managed to get it down to her room without making too much noise. Then she packed it. This took her all the rest of the morning, for she did not know how soon she would come back, if she came back at all. She did not go into the dining-room. She was not hungry, she could not have eaten anything, and she cared not at all what her father had or whether he had anything. She rather hoped that he did not. She went out, closing the door softly, walked down to the express office and ordered the express to call for her trunk. She had not ventured to use the telephone, for her father would be sure to hear as he always did. She had not decided whether she would tell him or not, but it was not likely that the noise of the men in going up and in bringing down her

trunk would escape his attention and investigation. At all events, she was not ready to tell him yet.

As Jean had feared, the men made the usual amount of noise in coming into the house and in going upstairs. Jean was ready to follow them out, her coat, hat and veil were on, she had given the last glance into the mirror and her bag, her purse, and her umbrella were all ready to be taken up. The study door slammed open, and her father's head poked out. The pointed beard pointed like an arrow or a spear straight at Jean, and the black eyes snapped over his spectacles.

"May I ask, Jean," he said in his cold, cutting voice, "the meaning of this army of men tramping through my hall?"

"The army consists of two men," Jean replied quietly, "who have come after my trunk."

"Why a trunk, I beg to inquire?" he asked, his eyes boring through his daughter. He found it strange that she did not seem to be affected by either his speech or his actions.

"I am going away, father."

The men were coming down the stairs with the trunk. They tried to suppress their grins, with indifferent success.

"I have not been favored with knowledge of it," he said acidly. "Where are you going?" The men were just passing the study door. "Hold!" he cried. "Stop! That trunk is not going out of this house."

The men hesitated, looking from Mr. Killian to

Jean. Jean waved them out. They went out, and down the steps.

"Ah!" Mr. Killian cried, louder than before. "Do you flout me? Where were you going, for how long, and why do you presume to do it without consulting me? I demand to know."

Jean compressed her lips for an instant. "Father," she said, her face pale, "the only thing that concerns you is that I am leaving this afternoon. Your behavior to me I cannot bear any longer." She took up her bag, her purse, and her umbrella as she spoke.

"What!" he almost screamed, his voice shrill with rage. "I forbid it. You will get no money from me. You have no right."

"I want no money from you. You forget that I am twenty-one. I need no money and no permission. I will not speak of rights. You have seemed to think that you were the only one who had rights."

She moved toward the door, but she did not hurry.

Mr. Killian threw wide the study door. "You shall not!" he fairly shrieked, darting after her. He was in a frenzy of rage. "You shall not! I command you!"

For the first time Jean was really afraid of her father, afraid of bodily harm. But he was no match for her in quickness. She was outside the gate in a moment. He stopped on the top step and raised his arm in a furious gesture.

"Go, then!" he screamed, beside himself. "Go,

then! What is to become of me? You do not care! Ingrate!"

Jean was leaning against the fence, rather shaken. "No," she said, as steadily as she could. "No, father, I do not care. I neither know nor care. I have done my best, and have borne all that I can — more than I ought."

He eyed her for a moment with malice. "Viper!" he said then, calmly and vindictively. "Viper!" And he turned, and the door slammed violently behind him.

Jean no longer leaned against the fence. The tears were slowly dropping, and she had to put down her bag for a moment to get at her handkerchief. A voice came to her from Madame Wadham's, and she turned. There was Madame Wadham coming toward her, the tall walking-staff in her hand. Jean ran across the street.

She was glad to feel the arm about her shoulders. "So it has come, Jean, dear?"

Jean nodded silently.

"I am not going to try to patch it up," Madame Wadham continued. "I could not have stood it half as long. It's rather a pity that he took it so hard, but it can't be helped. He would. And don't dwell on the names he called you. They are not deserved, and calling names is a cheap amusement. Don't you want to come in for a few minutes, to compose yourself?"

Jean shook her head. "Thank you, dear Madame

Wadham. It has been such a comfort to have you near! You are a tower of strength. But I won't come in. I want to get away as soon as I can. Will you say good-bye for me? My going has been rather sudden." Jean laughed a little. "And unexpected, after all. I find that I was hoping I should n't have to. I am afraid that I may change my mind if I wait. That would be a mistake. So, now, I think I'll go."

"Where to, Jean?"

"I don't know yet. I have n't had time to think. To some college, I think, and perhaps I can find something. I shall try to think it out in the train. I will let you know."

"Of course. And write often, Jean dear, and don't worry about your father. We will take care of him if he needs it. Most important of all, don't forget your promise — about the money, you know, if you need it."

Jean nodded. "I shall not forget. Now I will go. Good-bye, Madame Wadham."

"Good-bye, dear, and good luck go with you." And she kissed her, and patted her shoulder; and then she stood at the gate and watched Jean's strong, slender figure disappear down the street. The corner was reached, a wave of the hand, and Jean was lost to sight.

"God bless her!" Madame Wadham murmured; and she turned and went in.

CHAPTER XI

QUITE contrary to the custom, Thanksgiving was warm that year. It was not warm enough to tempt out upon the water a man whose blood ran somewhat sluggishly, for there was a sharpness in the breeze, gentle as it was; but the sunshine lay warm in the sheltered spots, and Mr. Tumbleberry could be relied upon to hit on a sheltered, sunny spot if there was a sheltered, sunny spot anywhere.

That was Mr. Chick's opinion. He had had his breakfast, had helped Clarissa clear up, and had loafed around as long as he could stand it. Then he started out in a leisurely search for Mr. Tumbleberry. He glanced in at that gentleman's mansion, but there was no sign of life there, and he waddled briskly on as far as the wharf. The pavilion was shut up — boarded up for six weeks past — so that he could not ask Elmer. He glanced about the wharf as far as he could see it, but he could not see it all, for a portion of the harbor end was hidden behind the building which, like an uncut jewel, adorned its bosom.

Mr. Chick did not give up, however. To him, wandering down the wharf's length, there was at last disclosed the bottom of a huge new packing-box, which had been turned on its side and its end shoved up against the building. It made a sunny corner, and although there was nobody in sight, a smile appeared

on the round, red face of Mr. Chick as he advanced with confidence and in good order. As he had expected, he found Mr. Tumbleberry comfortably ensconced within, his back shielded against what wind there was by the protecting box, and the sun pouring in upon him. Mr. Tumbleberry was busily engaged in doing nothing.

He looked up. "Hello, Chick," he boomed. "I kind o' thought y' might be 'round — 'r pretty nigh round. Step in an' have a chair. They's room f'r th' two of us, I think likely."

"Ain't y' got nothin' f'r a man t' set on, Tum?" Mr. Chick asked petulantly. "I want somethin' t' set on."

"Set on the side o' th' box 't 's down," Mr. Tumbleberry answered soothingly. "Guaranteed clean an' dry, an' I turned 'er down a purpose."

"I can't set on th' floor comf'table," said Mr. Chick, "an' I ain't never been able to do it. Mebbe I c'n find somethin' 'r another out here some'eres."

"I know y'r shape 's ag'in' you," Mr. Tumbleberry responded cheerfully. "'F y' sh'd find any stuffed furniture out there, Chick, le' me know, an' I'll help y' bring it in. It might be heavy, 'r they might be some cushions 'r whatever 't y' could n't manage. I'll be glad t' help y', Chick. Don't y' hesitate t' call on me."

"Huh!" said Mr. Chick. "Y' 'd bring all th' feather pillers 't I find, I s'pose. Don't y' put y'rself out. I don't see none from where I be."

Mr. Tumbleberry made no reply to this, and after a short search Mr. Chick appeared with a block of wood. He seated himself upon it and sighed; and the two sat there for some time in silence, basking in the warm sun, which flooded the interior of the packing-box.

Mr. Tumbleberry spoke at last. "What's th' news fr'm th' seat o' war, Chick?" he rumbled. "How 's ol' Killian a-gittin' on?"

"They ain't nothin' new," Mr. Chick replied, "'r I ain't heard none 'special but what you've heard. Killian 's a-gittin' on same 's ever. Mis' Wadham's lookin' after him, an' Baxter's takin' his meals to him. Y' know he ain't got no girl now. She left next day after Jean."

"I guess Mis' Wadham's got him tamed," Mr. Tumbleberry remarked placidly. "She c'd do it. I'd bet on her t' squench any o' these here fire-eaters. 'Did n't take her more 'n a week, I should n't wonder a mite."

"Less 'n that," said Mr. Chick, "an' starvation starin' him in the face."

"Sho!" said Mr. Tumbleberry. "Y' don' say!"

"Yeah. They was some lively times 'fore 't was settled," Mr. Chick continued. "I wish 't I c'd talk up t' him 'same 's she does," he said plaintively, "but I could n't never do it. He scares th' words out o' my head. Mis' Wadham don't scare wuth a cent. I was most gin'rally some'eres in hearin', an' I heard pretty nigh all th' talks they had. Killian

don't like Mis' Wadham f'r some reason 'r another, an' he did n't like t' take his meals 's a gift, 'specially fr'm her —"

"Yeah," Mr. Tumbleberry interrupted in reverberating tones, "I c'n see 't he would n't. I would n't, myself."

"Huh!" Mr. Chick ejaculated scornfully. "*You* would n't!"

"No," said Mr. Tumbleberry, "I would n't *like* to. That ain't sayin' I would n't *do* it. We all have t' do what we don't like to, sometimes, Chick. 'T would n't be perlite t' take an' throw her basket o' dinner up in her face, so t' say, an' I s'pose I 'd come 'round, I think likely."

"Huh!" said Mr. Chick again. "I guess y' would. Killian come 'round pretty quick. Mis' Wadham let him git his own f'r a day so 's he 'd know how he 'd like it. Then she sent Baxter over 'th a basket. Baxter had n't more 'n got back when he come out, mad 's a wet hen, a-carryin' th' basket, an' he went t' Mis' Wadham's front door an' rung th' bell. Baxter come t' th' door, but she did n't say nothin'. An' Killian handed th' basket in with a sort 'f a bow, an' said" — Mr. Chick mimicked Mr. Killian's voice with astonishing accuracy — "t' tell her mistress 't that basket 'd been left 't his house b' mistake. He was goin' t' say more, but Mis' Wadham come out o' th' livin' room, hoppin' mad. She let 'im have it f'r quite a spell. She did n't talk very loud, so I could n't hear what 't was she said, but I

see Killian wiltin' every second. Then sh' pushed back th' basket int' his hand, an' turned 'im 'round so 's he 's headed out o' th' gate. 'An' now,' sh' says, real loud, 'John Killian, you go right back, an' you eat what's in that basket. An' don't you dare t' bring it back with any food into it, an' don't y' dare t' throw any of it away. I shall know if y' do. Then y' may bring it back an' give it t' Baxter. An' what's more, they'll be another basketful f'r th' next meal time. Y' have n't forgotten how t' be a gentleman, I trust.' So he come back 's meek 's Moses, but he slammed th' door. I sh'd think th' doors in that house'd be all wore out."

"Yeah." But Mr. Tumbleberry was thinking of the basket. "An' did he eat it?" he asked wistfully.

"Oh, he eat it after a while. He slammed 'round for a spell, talkin' t' himself, an' then things got quiet, an' I worked up b' th' winder an' looked in. He 's eatin' like a hungry dog."

Mr. Tumbleberry sighed. "'T makes m' mouth water," he said, "jest t' think 'f it. I'd jest 's lives take th' basket back 'f 't was t' be sent over reg-'lar."

"'T was," said Mr. Chick.

Mr. Tumbleberry sighed again and shook his head. "Some folks don't know when they're in luck. Some folks don't."

"They 's one day," Mr. Chick went on, "'t I guess his meals wa 'n't settin' well on his stummick,

an' he talked t' Baxter th' same way he used t' talk t' Jean. He ought t' have knowed better. Mis' Wadham did n't like it, an' she come right over with her tall walkin' stick. I thought mebbe she 's a-goin' t' beat him up, but sh' give 'im th' wust dressin' down I ever hear. She 's got him now so 's he'll pretty nigh eat out 'f 'er han'."

"I should n't wonder a mite," Mr. Tumbleberry observed in resounding tones. "She's a man-tamer. What's Jean doin'?"

"She's to some college 'r another," replied Mr. Chick. "She goes t' th' classes an' sh' works 'n th' office. I'd kind o' like t' git a job 'n a college, Tum, but I don't s'pose —"

"No, Chick," bellowed Mr. Tumbleberry soothingly, "no, they's nothin' to it. Whereabouts 's this college o' Jean's?"

"I never c'n call t' mind where 't is," said Mr. Chick. "Som'eres 'round Philadelphy. Mis' Wadham says Jean 's a-doin' real well."

"'S curi's," said Mr. Tumbleberry reflectively, "th' kind o' things a girl 'll do now. Her father misses 'er, I think likely, shovellin' coal. How does he like takin' care 'f his furnace?"

"I'm a-takin' care 'f his furnace," said Mr. Chick meekly.

"Sho!" Mr. Tumbleberry exclaimed, somewhat crestfallen. "At a dollar a week, I think likely."

"Two," said Mr. Chick briefly.

"Sho!" Mr. Tumbleberry muttered. "Sho! Two

dollars a week! Y' don' say! But, Chick," he asked, restored to cheerfulness by a sudden thought, "'re y' gittin' it? Y' been paid yet?"

"I ain't got paid yet," Mr. Chick replied, "but I'm a-goin' t' git paid. Mis' Wadham said 't she'd see 't I was, 't she'd git it out o' Killian."

Mr. Tumbleberry was thoughtful. "I wonder," he said at last, "'f they ain't some other folks 't want a good able-bodied man sh'd take care o' furnaces. What y' think, Chick? I sh'd be glad t' have y'r jedgment."

"I dunno," Mr. Chick answered. "Y' know, Tum, they ain't s' many furnaces 'n th' village. They run t' stoves, mostly. 'N' what furnaces they is most giner'lly *has* some man t' take care 'f 'em. Y' might 'a' got two 'r three mebbe, 'f y' ast a month ago, but what furnaces they is is runnin' now."

"Well," said Mr. Tumbleberry slowly and regretfully, "I don' know 's I sh'd feel able t' do anythin' s' reg'lar 's takin' care 'f furnaces, but it'd be warm down by a furnace. It'd be warm. It'd be kind o' nice t' have a place 't 's warm t' set down by."

"Nice enough," Mr. Chick agreed, "but I'd hate t' have t' stay alongside some o' y'r furnaces 't I see. I'm most giner'lly warm enough."

"I ain't," said Mr. Tumbleberry emphatically. "You're padded. They must be nigh on to a dozen layers o' fat, I think likely, onto you, an' how many layers have I got onto me? Not ary one. It stands t'

reason 't you sh'd be warm an' me cold. Y' had n't ought t' expect 't a man like me 'd be warm in winter. I don't an' I ain't. I ain't got no protection."

"I don't see how in tarnation y' c'd carry it 'round 'f y' had it," said Mr. Chick. "Y' can't hardly carry y'r heft now. Y' 're so everlastin' tall, Tum, 't y' 'd weigh nigh onto two hunderd an' fifty 'f y' had all 't y' ought t' have onto you."

Mr. Tumbleberry deliberated. "Why, yes, Chick," he boomed heartily at last, "mebbe y' 're right. Y' 're 'most always wrong, but y' can't be wrong all th' time. 'F I weighed two fifty, like 's not I 'd be squ'shed right down t' th' ground, I should n't wonder a mite."

Mr. Tumbleberry seemed greatly comforted by this thought, and lapsed into a pleased silence, in which Mr. Chick joined him. Presently Mr. Chick announced that he had to go.

"Set comf'table, Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry boomed. "They ain't no hurry. Y' ain't got no work t' do to-day."

Mr. Chick explained that, as it was Thanksgiving, there were various duties which he should perform in connection with the preparation of dinner.

"Oh," Mr. Tumbleberry remarked, quietly for him. He gazed at Mr. Chick's ruddy countenance, which became even ruddier under the look. "Y' have t' help th' cook, I should n't wonder," he said solemnly.

Mr. Chick was fiery red by this time. He mum-

bled something about being glad to do it. There were a great many things to be done.

"Well, Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry said with hearty approval, "mebbe y' 're right. 'Rissa's kind o' frail lookin'. Y' ought t' do all y' can t' make 'er last days comf'table. I thought, th' last time I see her, 't she wa' n't long f'r this world."

"Huh!" ejaculated Mr. Chick. "Frail! Sh' c'd take an' break you in two, Tum."

"Mebbe," assented Mr. Tumbleberry cheerfully. "Mebbe sh' could. I ain't thinkin' o' makin' no wrastlin' match with her. Has she give y' her phot'grapht yit, Chick?"

Mr. Chick muttered angrily, and got up.

"Now, don't y' go an' git mad, Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry said soothingly. "I was only aimin' t' do y' a favor when y' do git that phot'grapht. I'll bet y' ain't even ast 'er f'r it. Ask 'er."

Again Mr. Chick muttered angrily.

"You're th' techiest feller, Chick, 't I ever see. Y' ought t' be more careful, bein' o' that build. Y' 're liable t' drop dead any minute 'f y' let y'r temper git th' upper hand. Well," added Mr. Tumbleberry, "I won't keep y' fr'm peelin' potatoes. Thanksgivin' don't jar me none. Th' 'dvantage o' bein' disconnected, th' way I be, is 't I don't have nothin' t' do about dinner. I don't even have t' eat any."

Mr. Chick was shocked, and he showed it. He was just turning away, but he turned back. "Sho!" he

said. "Ain't y' a-goin' t' have no dinner, Tum? Ain't y' got nothin'?"

"Oh, yeah," said Mr. Tumbleberry carelessly. "I 'got somethin' 'r another, an' I'll git me more 'f I feel like goin' after it. But I don' know 's it's wuth while t' build me a fire. 'T's comf'table here 'n th' sun."

Mr. Chick knew very well that going after something to eat was a very different thing from getting it, so far as Mr. Tumbleberry was concerned, and as to Mr. Tumbleberry's statement that he had "somethin' 'r another," he did not believe a word of it. The thought of being absolutely without anything to eat struck him with horror — and on Thanksgiving Day, too.

"I tell y' what, Tum," he said, "I'll be comin' along after dinner, an' I'll stop here f'r you. P'r'aps I c'n make out t' leave y' a basket 'f 'Rissa — but p'r'aps I can't. I'll come, anyways."

Mr. Chick stumped along up the hill to Mrs. Keep's, muttering to himself. He found Clarissa very busy. She was not overwhelmed — she never was that — but she had her competent hands full, for there was the dinner for fifteen boarders to be got ready and served, and Clarissa had no help except such as Mrs. Keep gave her. That was not much, and to tell the truth, it was more of a hindrance than a help to have Mrs. Keep fussing around the kitchen. Mr. Chick was different. He minded her least suggestion, never questioned it, and effaced himself; in

each of which particulars his behavior was not that of Mrs. Keep. Mrs. Keep, however, fed her boarders well. It would be more accurate to say that she let Clarissa feed them well, for she was wise enough to know a good thing when she saw it; and she let Clarissa do the ordering without interference. Clarissa had entire charge of that end of it, which relieved Mrs. Keep of a great deal of worry, and made her house a very popular place. It did not cost her very much either, as she found from her periodical balancing of accounts, and she felt that it paid her well. So she was satisfied, Clarissa was satisfied, and the boarders were satisfied to the point of enthusiasm; a houseful of contented people.

Mr. Chick was late, a fact of which he was made aware as soon as he opened the door. Clarissa greeted him briefly, and put him to work at once. His short legs fairly twinkled as he carried into the dining-room the many dishes which Clarissa handed him, and he had no time to give a thought to Mr. Tumbleberry. There was a huge great turkey, its legs in the air; a big ham; potatoes and squash and cabbage in abundance; cranberry sauce; gravy of two kinds; the bread and the pickles Mrs. Keep attended to. In addition there were in reserve apple, mince and pumpkin pies, and a dish of apples and nuts. The cider was in a jug on the floor. Each man — they were nearly all men — each man was expected to fill up his glass from the jug and to pass it to the next man. As they sat down at the signal of

the large bell Mr. Brace, the road builder — whose specialty was naval history — announced that "England expects that every man will do his duty."

Every man did his duty. When it came to the nuts the action was but half-hearted, a fact that Mrs. Keep and Clarissa had counted upon. Mr. Brace, leaning back in his chair, murmured, "We have met the enemy and they are ours." Then he smiled and looked about him, and everybody else smiled because it was expected of him, not because he knew what he was smiling at. Then they sat quiet for a few minutes, sighed, got up slowly, and it was all over.

Mr. Chick ambled into the kitchen, meeting Clarissa on the way. She should have been tired, but she gave no evidence of it.

"That 's a good dinner, 'Rissa," he said, smiling. "I ain't hardly able t' walk."

She smiled at him in return. "You liked it, did you?" she said. "I'm glad."

Mr. Chick thought of Mr. Tumbleberry, sitting on the wharf in his packing-box, beginning to be a little chilly, perhaps — and hungry — famished.

He turned. "Say, 'Rissa," he began. "D' y' s'pose — c'd y' put — is they any —"

Clarissa laughed. "Well, Chick, what is it you want?"

He spoke lower. "Well, 'Rissa," he said, a note of anxiety in his voice, "I 's thinkin' o' Tum. He ain't got nothin' t' eat, I'm tol'able sure of it. An' it's

Thanksgivin', an' y' 've give' us a rattlin' good dinner. I 's wonderin' 'f y' could n't find somethin' 't wa'n't no use, an' put it in a basket so 's I c'd leave it f'r him. I'd hate f'r him t' have nothin' t' eat, Thanksgivin'. 'Course I'd make it up t' Mis' Keep."

"Oh, your old good-for-nothing Tum!" she said with impatience. "Well, all right, then. I'll get him something, but it would serve him right to have to starve."

"Y' know, 'Rissa," said Mr. Chick eagerly, "'t it won't make no difference t' Tum 'f they 's broken pieces. Y' c'n sort o' cut 'em up — bones is all right 'f they 's some meat onto 'em."

Clarissa laughed at him once more. "Don't you bother. Did n't I say I'd fix it? Bring me in the rest of the turkey and the ham and the other things. I should think it would make him sick," she added, "and I hope it does."

When Mr. Chick was finally ready to start, and took up the basket which was destined for Mr. Tumbleberry, he was astonished at the weight of it.

"Jumpin' Jiminy, 'Rissa!" he exclaimed. "This basket 's heavy. What y' got into it — lumps o' lead?"

"Same thing, maybe, as far as Tum 's concerned," she said with the same touch of impatience. "There's a few dishes and his dinner. Now, don't turn it upside-down, or you'll have the gravy all over the basket. And when you bring it back, don't

put the dishes with the rest. I'll have to put lye to them, soak them and scrub them."

"Oh, say, 'Rissa," Mr. Chick protested, "Tum ain't 's dirty 's all that. He —"

"Don't tell me," Clarissa interrupted, "that Tumbleberry is n't dirty. I know it. I'd have given him paper plates if we'd had 'em, and a pasteboard box, so that you would n't have to bring anything back. I hate to have 'em in the house. Now, go along, for mercy's sake."

"But 'Rissa," Mr. Chick said anxiously, "y' ain't mad, are you? Y' know I'm much obliged."

Clarissa laughed. "No, I'm not mad with you. It's kind of you to think of it. You'd better run along. The dinner 'll get cold."

Mr. Chick had not expected that he would have a hot dinner for Mr. Tumbleberry. It was better than he had even hoped for. But Clarissa was continually doing more than was hoped for. It was like her. He went out with the basket, but he did not run. You could not expect him to do that.

Mr. Tumbleberry was occupying the same place that he had occupied all the morning. He had not moved, so far as Mr. Chick could see, and in the past two hours the sun had got around so that Mr. Tumbleberry's corner was in shadow.

"Hello, Chick!" he said, his voice booming and reverberating within the packing-box. "I was jest a-goin' t' move me. I 'been thinkin' f'r some time 't 't was gittin' cold here. What y' got?"

"I got a basket o' dinner f'r you," said Mr. Chick, "'t 'Rissa put up. She said 't 's hot, Tum, an' y' better eat it 'fore 't gits cold." He set the basket down carefully. "They 's gravy into it, so y' be careful not t' spill it all over. An' when y' 're done, set th' basket out som'eres an' I 'll take it back."

"I'm 'bliged t' 'Rissa," Mr. Tumbleberry remarked cheerfully. "She al'ays was partial t' me — same 's a cat is t' a dog. But that ain't goin' t' int'fere with my appetite none. I guess I c'n make out t' eat a snack. Jest leave it 't my house, will y', Chick?"

Mr. Chick could hardly believe the evidence of his ears. He looked sharply at Mr. Tumbleberry.

"What?" he asked with rising indignation. "What's that y' say, Tum?"

"I said," Mr. Tumbleberry answered nonchalantly, "to jest leave it at my house. I'm a-goin' there right away, f'r it's gettin' kind o' cold here. I'll be right behind y', Chick."

Mr. Chick glared at Mr. Tumbleberry without speaking for some seconds.

"Don't y' want I should eat it f'r you?" he asked with a fine irony. "I would, only I've eat s' much dinner 't I can't eat no more now. But I ain't a-goin' t' take it t' your house nor nowhere else. Y' c'n take it t' any place y' please, an' y' c'n take it inside o' you 'r outside, but y' see 't y' leave th' basket so 's I c'n git it 's I go back."

Mr. Tumbleberry knew when he was beaten, and he perceived a certain finality in this utterance. Mr. Chick was firm.

"Don't y' be sore, Chick," he said. "I thought y' might be goin' by, an' I knew y' 'd jest 's liev 's not. 'T ain't wuth mentionin'. Where are y' goin'?"

"I'm goin' t' Mis' Wadham's," answered Mr. Chick, "an' I'm goin' t' Killian's. I got work t' do."

"Takin' care o' furnaces," responded Mr. Tumbleberry somewhat bitterly, "f'r two dollars a week. Well," he added, sighing, "I might 's well be gittin' along. Jest take th' basket up th' wharf, Chick. I 'been settin' s' long I ain't got th' use o' my arms yit."

At the head of the wharf they parted, Mr. Chick to go on happily up the hill. Mr. Tumbleberry took up the basket, and shambled homeward. As he opened his door, and went in, he stepped into an atmosphere which was chilly and foul — an effluvium from living humanity that was none too clean, as well as from dead fish, flesh and fowl. He was seized with a fit of coughing. When the paroxysm had passed he set down the basket, and proceeded to examine the contents. There was a great deal in it, for Clarissa was not niggardly. Mr. Tumbleberry, after contemplating his supply, divided it roughly into five parts. Four of these he wrapped in old newspaper and put in his cupboard among the old tins and the other rubbish.

"There!" he muttered. "'F I don't git too hungry that ought t' last me four days more."

Then he coughed again; and, still wearing his hat and his overcoat, he began to eat.

CHAPTER XII

As Mr. Chick hove in sight of the Killians', two blocks away, an erect old figure emerged from the gate across the street, crossed the road, and vanished behind the great lilac bush which hid the Killian front gate from his sight.

Mr. Chick immediately put on a little more steam. "Mis' Wadham!" he murmured. "Wonder what sh' 's up to now. They must be somethin' 'r another."

Mr. Killian was just opening the front door as Mr. Chick rounded the lilac bush. Evidently Mr. Killian had been much absorbed in whatever he was doing in his study, for his hair stood at every angle, as though, in his absorption, his fingers had been burrowing in it, or he had used it as a pen-wiper; his necktie was awry; his pointed beard was aggressive, and he looked sharply through his spectacles, prepared to say something as sharp as his look. When he saw who it was at his door, his whole attitude changed. The change may have been due to his instincts as a gentleman — instincts long dormant — or it may have been just plain fear which prompted it.

He bowed formally. "Is there anything that I can do for Mrs. Wadham?" he asked coldly. He would not call her Madame Wadham; and she, perceiving

it and his reasons, laughed at him as she returned his formal bow.

"Yes," she said, "there is. Baxter is very busy to-day with her duties. I can't add to them, for she is an old woman. So there is no —"

He was bowing again, formally. "I will absolve you from any fancied obligation," he interrupted, "in connection with a basket — hereafter."

She laughed. "Fiddlesticks!" she said. "You are in a great hurry with your absolution. I am having dinner at home, and not going to Cynthia's. I want you to come over and have dinner with me. It is in — oh, about a quarter of an hour."

"Thank you," he replied, "but I regret —"

She was angry, and thumped her stick down upon the step.

"Don't be a fool!" she said. "I ask you to dinner, and the only thing you have to do is to come. We have dinner at this time to relieve Baxter. Dinner at night would keep her at work late. You know as well as I do. And there is no reason on earth, John Killian, why you cannot come. So get ready, and be over in a few minutes."

It was curious to watch Mr. Killian during this discourse. As Mr. Chick would have described it, he wilted every second. At its close he was properly meek, but in his meekness there was a feeling of pride, which he was far from acknowledging to himself; still farther from accounting for.

The fifteen minutes were not up when Mr. Killian

presented himself at Madame Wadham's door, his hair smoothed, his necktie straightened, and his clothes brushed. Madame Wadham herself opened the door without giving him a chance to ring. He followed her into the living-room, where a fire was burning cheerfully; and where she sat in a low arm-chair before it and motioned him to another.

"I'm glad to see you here, John Killian," she began. "What makes you so crotchety and contrary I don't know. If you knew how little effect that has on me, you'd give it up. I know you will give it up, for it only amuses me, and makes me laugh. It's just plain childishness, and of no use. You and I are going to be friends. I'm all ready, and we've got to be."

She was smiling at him, an amused smile, as if he were only a contrary child. He hardly knew what to say, so he said nothing. His feelings were a curious mixture. Following his habit he would have been sarcastic and biting; but with this firm and friendly old woman he felt a strange reluctance to be so; he really did not want to be. The atmosphere of the room may have had something to do with it, the low, friendly fire, the comfortable, friendly chairs, the furnishings, the low-ceiled old room — it was all peaceful and serene and dignified. It would have been hard to assume the attitude of mind that had become second nature to him in his own house. His own house was more like a barn, without the peace and dignity which can attach to a barn. As for his

study, in which he spent nearly all of his time, it was a confusion which did not tend to peace and serenity and friendliness. He found that he was gazing into the fire and was silent.

Baxter appeared at the door. "We'll be there in a few minutes, Baxter," said Madame Wadham. "Just let us sit here a little longer."

"Whenever you're ready, Madame Wadham," Baxter replied.

Baxter vanished silently, and still John Killian said nothing. Madame Wadham was watching him as he gazed into the fire, a look of amusement in her eyes, but no smile upon her lips. They sat in silence for perhaps two or three minutes. Then he came to himself with a start, looked up, and bowed awkwardly.

"I beg your pardon, Madame Wadham," he said.

There it was. He had called her Madame without thinking, and his manner was subdued and softened.

She smiled at him. "Shall we go in?"

He rose quickly, with another bow, but it was not awkward, it was courtly. She took his offered arm, and they went into the dining-room. There was the table set for two, with silver dishes for the roast and the vegetables, and great silver covers over them. She motioned him to his seat. Before her own was a large platter with a huge cover. She took up the carving knife, and Baxter came in silently and removed the cover. The turkey looked like bronze.

"I should be glad to do the carving," said Mr.

Killian, "if it will relieve you — although I am afraid I am not very good at it."

"Thank you, John Killian," Madame Wadham returned warmly. "Thank you. I am quite used to it." She laughed. "I do believe that you are human, after all. I shall call you John hereafter. It seems the natural thing to do, and I hope you will not object."

The shadow of a smile passed across his face. He bowed and said nothing. He had not been in the habit of smiling, or of making pretty or gracious speeches, for some years. They came hard, and he had already made one or two. But he was pleased. Madame Wadham saw it.

"If you want something to do," she continued, "you may help to that dish in front of you. Baxter will attend to the others."

Baxter was moving silently about the table, filling the delicate old wine glasses beside their plates.

"Some old port," Madame Wadham went on, skilfully dismembering the bird. "It is not bootleg stuff, so you need not be afraid of it. I have had it for many years — since long before a paternal government took to tampering with the Constitution at the behest of the societies. I do not propose that any government — much less *my* government — shall tell me what I may take and what I may not. Not much! Not for Joseph!" she concluded with a sniff of disdain and decision.

Madame Wadham had done with her helping, and

she leaned back for a moment. It is really hard labor carving a turkey for twelve, but not so hard for two. Mr. Killian was gently twirling the stem of his wine glass and watching her. She bent forward and touched her own.

He inclined his head. "May I?" he asked, lifting his glass. "To your very good health, Madame, and happiness and a long life!"

Madame Wadham impulsively stretched out her arm, her glass in her hand.

"Touch glasses!" she said. "We must touch glasses to drink that toast." The glasses clinked softly. "And to your own," she added.

They sipped their wine. Madame Wadham's eyes sparkled.

She smiled at him as she put down her glass. "John," she said, "you are delicious — positively delicious. I am finding out a good many things in a short time, after living opposite you for — how many years is it? Ten?"

"About that. Rather more, I think."

He was unaccustomed to this sort of thing, and he was finding that he rather liked it, on the whole. Who does n't, man or woman? No one had called him such things for twenty years or more, if it had ever happened. He was embarrassed.

"I am not — er — or anything of the kind," he said, after a little pause, and looking down at the table cloth. "The port is delicious, if you like. Supreme."

"It is good, is n't it?" She laughed a little. "I am not one of those falsely modest beings who always run down their own possessions, you see. But I think you knew that already. We got it in London, twenty years ago. I remember that I went with my husband to the wine merchant's."

He raised his eyes. "Oh, did you?" Madame Wadham saw that he was interested.

"Would you care to hear an anecdote of that visit? Well, the wine merchant brought out several bottles of different ports and different vintages, and we were tasting them. He was deliberate — slow, I have no doubt that many of our countrymen would have thought. Good wine breeds deliberateness. It deserves no less. He came to this. 'Now, this,' he said, 'I consider very fine. I would be glad to have your opinion.' He poured out two glasses, lovingly, it seemed to me. My husband and I lifted the glasses and sipped. My husband was a connoisseur of wines, and he sipped slowly, as good wine should be drunk, holding it in his mouth a while to get the full aroma. You know you lose more than half otherwise. The wine merchant watched him approvingly. Two men had come in — I do not know how they got in, for it was not a public room, but there they were, standing near the table where we were all sitting, watching us with interest. These men seemed to be wealthy Americans.

"When my husband had given his verdict, one of the men spoke to the merchant. 'Say, excuse me,'

he said, 'but could we have some samples of that?' The merchant bowed, got some glasses, and poured the wine. The men threw their heads back, and literally poured it down. The merchant looked inexpressibly pained. He got up, took the bottles and carried them to another room.

"The men were waiting for him, their hands on their glasses. 'That was fine,' said the one who had asked for the wine. 'Bully! Let's have another.'

"The merchant was still standing. He bowed gravely. 'There is no more,' he said. 'I am sorry that I can do nothing for you.' And he sat down with us once more, and turned his back on them.

"They glared at his back for a moment, then turned and went out.

"My husband could not help laughing. 'They were prepared to give you a big order,' he said, 'I've no doubt they came in for that purpose.'

"'No doubt,' said the merchant. 'I have that kind occasionally, but I would not sell them a single pint of my good wine. It would be wasted, and I will not waste good wine — knowingly. One might as well feed it to the pigs!'"

Mr. Killian was smiling. "They must have known that he was lying.'"

"Of course. He spoke without hesitation, and in such a way that they could not help knowing it. There was no attempt to deceive, and to my mind there is no lie where there is no attempt at deception. But what could they say? It completely

blocked all argument. I wonder if there are any such merchants left now — men who care — almost affectionately — for the goods they deal in enough to refuse to sell to people who will not appreciate. I am about ready to believe that the race of really good workmen is extinct, the men who loved their work and took pride in its product rather than in its emoluments."

"I believe you are right," said Mr. Killian. "There seem to be none of the old-fashioned workmen left. But Chick, now, as far as he goes —"

She laughed. "Oh, Chick, yes. He is a happy, honest, earnest blunderhead. I am really almost fond of Chick. I could wish that he saw less of Tumbleberry, or that Tumbleberry was different. Still, shiftless ways don't seem to appeal to Chick, and he will get no harm."

The time came for the coffee. The wine had warmed Mr. Killian's heart, and he had been expanding as dinner progressed.

"Let 's have our coffee in by the fire," said Madame Wadham. "We can be more comfortable, and you can smoke, and I have something to show you."

"But I don't smoke, Madame Wadham."

"You ought to," she rejoined quickly. "You ought to smoke a pipe. My grandson does. I believe it quiets the nerves, I really do. Will says it does, although I don't see how he can know anything about it. You might try it. It would n't have any immediately injurious effect, would it?"

Mr. Killian really laughed. "I should n't get sick, if you mean that," he said. "I *can* smoke, but I have no pipe or anything else."

"*I* have no pipe," she said, "but I will get one — if you will choose it — and keep it here for you. I don't believe in selecting a man's pipes for him. It is n't apt to be a success. There are cigars and cigarettes, however. I don't use them — yet. I may, though."

She got up and led the way into the room where the armchairs stood in front of the fire.

"You know, John," she said, "I think that you may as well come in here every day for your meals. For some of them, anyway, and I should prefer to have you come for all. It will be easier for Baxter, for one thing, and it is more civilized than eating out of a basket. That seems almost like feeding the dog."

For the second time in many years he laughed with amusement.

"Well, why not feed the dog? You don't expect the dog to be always pleasant and playful."

"Usually I should. And I expect you, John, to be pleasant always, if not always playful. Come, what do you say?"

"If you prefer it, and if it will be easier for you," he answered readily enough, "I suppose I should say that I shall be glad to. But I warn you that I shall not be always pleasant."

"At least," she said quickly, "you will not be al-

ways unpleasant. Look in that cupboard over the chimney — at the side — and you will find cigars and cigarettes. Take what you like."

The coffee came in while he was looking for the cigars and cigarettes.

"With your permission," he said, "I will confine my attention to cigarettes to-day. Perhaps I may come to like cigars in time."

"Or a pipe," she said. "You know you are to smoke a pipe. Cigarettes are not soothing to the nerves, I am convinced."

"Are my nerves so bad?"

"Certainly they are. In a terrible state. You'll have to be careful or you'll go all to pieces some day. Everybody is n't going to be so considerate as I am. For I *am* considerate, John — of the effect upon you — in all my acts. It is supposed to be the proper course to be unaware of such circumstances, but I never did pose as a fool."

"The part would not fit you very well," he rejoined somewhat grimly.

She laughed a little. "I want to show you something," she said. "If you will look in the upper left hand drawer of that desk in the corner, you will see a letter addressed to me. That's it. Let me have it a moment, please. I only want to make sure that there's nothing you should not see."

He knew the writing on the envelope. "From Jean, I judge," he remarked, displaying no eagerness. Madame Wadham was not disturbed. He

would be properly eager when she gave it to him, she felt sure.

She glanced through the letter, and held it out to him.

"It will do," she said. "If you come upon any private matters you will make allowances. You may skip them, for they would not interest you."

He almost snatched the letter, plunged into it, read it through, every word; then turned back and read portions a second time. Meanwhile he smoked furiously, puffing at his cigarette until he had nearly its whole length glowing at once. Madame Wadham watched him with a half-smile of amusement. At last he handed the letter back to her with evident reluctance.

"Well," she observed, "you see. She is pretty well established. She has her office work, which cannot take so very much time, and it gives her tuition. You saw what courses she is taking, and she seems to have a good room. She seems to be happy. There have been letters before this, but this was the first one to give any real information."

He had risen and was walking to and fro. His cigarette burned his fingers. Impatiently he threw it into the fire and took another.

"Who is this fellow, Hunt, that she mentions so often?" he asked almost fiercely.

"Is n't it in you, John," said Madame Wadham, "to be a little bit serene? You take everything so vehemently. Do sit down."

He gave a short laugh. "I beg your pardon. My shattered nerves, you know." He sat down again, leaning forward in his chair. "And now, Hunt. Who is he? She mentions him often enough."

"I'm sure I don't know." She glanced through the letter again hastily. "Oh," she said, "it's unconscious, the frequent mention. He seems to be an instructor in one of her courses. I should n't let that worry me. Don't you know that girls always set certain teachers on a pedestal?"

"She speaks of him very often."

"Why, perhaps she does speak of him more often than she does of her father." She smiled at him. "But I know nothing about the man. She has n't mentioned him before."

"It would not be necessary," he said dryly, "to bring his name into every line to surpass her reference to me. She does not mention her father."

"She does not mention her father," Madame Wadham repeated. "But consider, John. Why should she mention her father? There is little reason why she should speak of you with affection, and probably she is not ready to do otherwise." He was about to speak — hastily, it is to be supposed — but she stopped him. "Wait. Don't say it — whatever it is. We are going to change that, between us. Unless you — er — I use the language of my grandson, for it is often very expressive — unless you fall down on your part, Jean will mention her father often enough before you see her again."

He looked startled. "Why — er — what do you mean by that? It might mean anything. Don't you expect her to come home again?"

"Oh, I did n't mean that, although I don't expect to see her for some months. It is an expensive trip, and Jean has no money to throw away on railway fares. I meant next summer — possibly the Easter vacation. You do your part, and she will meet you more than halfway."

He was silent for some time, looking down into the fire. "I thought," he said at last, "that she might be coming on for Christmas. They have a vacation then, I suppose. If — if the fares are a consideration," he added hesitatingly, "I can send her the money."

Madame Wadham shook her head. "I would n't. Let her get used to things a little. She is bitter now, and might not want to come."

"Oh," he said, "I see." He squirmed in his chair.

"And you leave it to me. It will come out all right. All I ask of you, John," she said, "is that you will remember, and not give way to the temptation to say sharp and bitter things, for you do it too well. I know," she added quickly, for he seemed about to speak, "what that temptation is, for I am tempted — continually — to do the same thing. I do it very well, too. We must n't, either of us, or we shall be sorry."

"Well," he said slowly. "Well." He rose. "I will consider. I think I had better go now."

"You are to stay longer, or go now, just exactly as you like. I want you to feel free to do as you please in such matters. We shall see enough of each other, and we must n't make it burdensome — on either side."

Again he was startled. "I hope —"

She laughed, and interrupted him. "Don't be afraid," she said. "It has n't, or I should have let you know it somehow or other. I am not entirely without resources. We shall have a little cold supper about seven, and I shall expect you. I'm sorry to make you eat heartily in the middle of the day, but on holidays I have to. Baxter must have a chance. It won't happen at other times. Good-bye, John."

Mr. Chick, puttering about the yard, saw Mr. Killian emerge from the house. He seemed absorbed in his thoughts. He was smoking a cigarette furiously, so that its whole length was glowing. He crossed the road slowly, his eyes on the ground, mounted his front steps, and did not slam the door behind him. That fact greatly surprised Mr. Chick.

He stopped his pretense of work and gazed at the Killians' front door. "Jumpin' Jiminy!" muttered Mr. Chick. "I'll be jiggered!"

CHAPTER XIII

Mr. Killian did not know moderation in anything. Consequently, in following Madame Wadham's wishes as to smoking — he did not want to follow her wishes, but against his own desire he was impelled to, and he did — in following her wishes, I say, he got to smoking inordinately, and it was cigarettes at that. He was a regular attendant at the Wadham homestead by this time, for at least two meals a day, and it was not to be expected that his consumption of cigarettes at such a rate would escape Madame Wadham's knowledge. Upon her insistence, he got a pipe; but Mr. Killian was not a natural pipe smoker, and he found it hard work. He kept at it, however, and by Christmas he was doing pretty well.

The news that met him, a few days before Christmas, very nearly upset him. It did unsettle him, so that he was near to a relapse into his old habit of biting speech. Something restrained him, perhaps nothing more than the unacknowledged fear that he might lose the comfort of two or three meals a day, prepared and eaten in a civilized manner; perhaps, more than that, it may have been an unaccountable reluctance to do a thing which Madame Wadham did not want him to do, and to which she objected for his own good. For he knew, in his inmost soul,

that it was his own good which was at the bottom of her objection, and he realized dimly that he was beginning to have a deep respect and even regard for the woman at whom he had so often openly sneered such a few weeks ago. The news was, as Madame Wadham had announced, that he was to go with her to Cynthia Druce's for Christmas dinner. He had begun a hesitating refusal, but she had cut him short.

The day before the dreaded day there had been a light fall of snow. The falling snow had then turned to rain, and after enough rain had fallen to thoroughly soak the snow, it had cleared and turned cold. On Christmas Day the walking was both difficult and dangerous; it was better adapted to skates.

Mr. Killian was conscious of a curious feeling of elation as he started over to Madame Wadham's. When they left for the Druces' he was solicitous that she should be very careful.

She laughed. "I'm all right, John, thank you," she said. "My staff comforts me — although that is not to be taken as a quotation, and I don't expect you to recognize the allusion."

"I am not altogether ignorant," he retorted quietly, "although I am ignorant enough. Will you?" And he held out his arm.

She laughed again. "Thank you, John, I will," she said, taking his arm. "I apologize for not giving you credit. Now we can hold each other up. We'll be all right, but it's Baxter I'm afraid for. She has

slipped twice to-day — luckily she did not fall. Old bones are brittle — mine are not, but then, they are not old."

He made a slight noise in his throat. It sounded like a growl.

"Was that an objection to my statement?" Madame Wadham asked. "But never mind. I am taking no notice of it, you observe."

"I remarked the fact," he said dryly.

"Baxter," she resumed, "has promised that she will not go out again, at least while I am gone. So my mind is at ease for the immediate future, and we can enjoy ourselves."

Whatever doubts may have assailed Mr. Killian on that head, he did enjoy himself. The Druces were all there, and they were all cordial. The past seemed to be wiped out and to have left no ill will behind it. That was Madame Wadham's doing, as he realized when he came to think it over afterward.

Although he was rather silent during the first part of dinner, there was no lack of conversation. Everybody talked when the spirit moved them, which was, for the most part, when they were not engaged in eating, sometimes when they were. Mr. Killian contemplated the good-natured confusion resulting, and found it agreeable; and when they appealed to him, which happened more and more often, he joined in their conversation. He had a quick mind and a pretty wit, if inclined to be rather

acid and bitter. But in this respect he exercised restraint, leaving the brilliancy with just enough of the acid to give point. Before dinner was over he shone in a quiet way, and there was no sign of disapproval.

When they rose from the table he had become aware what a prominent part he had taken. "I talked too much," he said in low tones to Madame Wadham. "Why did n't you stop me?"

Madame Wadham smiled up at him. "Nonsense, John!" she said. "You were delightful. I was enjoying it too much to stop you, and I had a pride in you which was, in a way, proprietary — like a patent medicine, you know."

He laughed shortly. "Thank you," he said. "Warranted to leave a bad taste. It is likely enough."

"A patent medicine, you know, is always agreeable to take."

"And no good effects come from it, if it is not positively injurious."

She laughed. "Do sit down." She indicated a place beside her on the sofa. "None of us knew what you were capable of, not even I, and I know you pretty well by this time."

Drusilla, smiling, plumped herself down on the sofa on the other side of her grandmother, and hugged her arm.

"What are you two laughing about?" she demanded. "Won't you let me in on the joke?"

Mr. Killian shook his head. "It was no joke."

"He was feeling rather down, Drusilla," said Madame Wadham, "and I was cheering him up."

"I was ashamed of myself," added Mr. Killian baldly, "if you really wish to know. Like a seventeen-year-old boy who has been showing off, and has just found it out."

Drusilla laughed. "I call that unkind, Mr. Killian. I am seventeen. Does that remark apply to girls?"

"Permit me to reassure you. Are not girls perfect? Nothing was farther from my intention than making that personal application. It was inexcusable in me. I talked too much."

"Oh!" Drusilla cried. "*Don't* feel that way. Why, I came over here just in the hope that you'd keep it up. For that matter, we all talked a good deal — much more than you did."

"You're one of us, John," said Madame Wadham gently. She looked around. "Here comes the coffee."

It was beginning to get dark when they left the Druces'; but dusk comes early on Christmas. Madame Wadham's house was dark. Not a glimmer of light shone from any window. She noticed the fact as soon as they came in sight of the house, and she almost stopped.

"Why!" she exclaimed. "Strange! And Baxter usually lights the lamps early. I like it so." She went on again. "I suppose she must have fallen asleep. I hope nothing has happened to her."

"It is not likely," he said. "What could have?" But he quickened his steps unconsciously, and found her urging him.

"Nothing, I suppose, but I shall feel better when I know. You'd better come in with me, at least until I find out."

They found Baxter just outside the kitchen door, lying half on the old doorstone, unconscious. There was no telling how long she might have been lying there, unable to move.

"She slipped," said Madame Wadham, pointing to a patch of ice near the edge of the doorstone, "and broke something, we don't know what. Help me get her in, John, gently. We shall run less risk of hurting her if we both take hold, and I am quite able." For he had protested that he could do it alone, and that she should not take the risk. "I wish we had something to put her on."

"There's the ironing board," he suggested.

"The very thing. You're a genius."

Before they had her quite in place on the ironing board there was a familiar step on the path, and Mr. Chick hove in sight around the corner of the house. He had come, according to his custom, to fix the furnace. Baxter opened her eyes and smiled feebly.

"What is it?" she murmured. "Oh, I must have fainted. I'm sorry to give you trouble, Madame Wadham."

Madame Wadham pressed her hand. "It 's nothing, Baxter. I'd take much more trouble for

you. We're going to try to put you on your bed without hurting you. Let us know if we do."

"Not you, Madame Wadham! I'd never forgive myself if I let you be lifting me."

"Well," said Madame Wadham, "if you insist, I will let Chick take my half. He has just come."

Baxter had not seen Chick, who stood a little beyond her feet, gazing at her earnestly, his mouth half open, and the color coming and going in his cheeks. It was pretty dark, and nobody was looking at him anyway.

Baxter smiled. "That's all right, then. Chick's strong and he's willing."

"'Course I be," said Mr. Chick readily. "I'll take y' in. Only tell me where 't is 't y' want t' git to. What 'd she do, Mis' Wadham, slip an' break 'er leg?"

"We don't know, Chick," Madame Wadham replied, "just what happened, or what harm is done, but it may be so. She must n't be hurt. I'll light a lamp, and you and Mr. Killian both take hold."

"Sho!" said Mr. Chick, looking down at Baxter again with pity in his eyes. "That's too bad! Sho!"

"I went to the door," said Baxter faintly, "and just stepped out to get a breath of air, and must have — must have — have —" And her voice faded into silence.

Madame Wadham was lighting the lamp. "She 's fainted again. Now I'll hold the lamp while you and

Chick lift her in. You take her feet, John, and Chick take the head of the board. Fortunately her room is downstairs. She found it hard to go up, and I fixed her room off the kitchen. That door, Chick."

Having got Baxter safely on her bed, Madame Wadham telephoned for the doctor. Mr. Killian and Mr. Chick waited. It did not take long. She put the telephone down and sighed.

"There's nothing to be done now," she said, "until the doctor gets here. Baxter will be unable to do anything for weeks, at the very best. I wish, Chick," she continued, "that you would make some inquiries, and try to find out whether there is n't some trustworthy woman who would come in and help me."

"Sure I will," Mr. Chick responded promptly. "I'll ask 'Rissa right off soon 's I git home. She'll know. I s'pose you want somebody t' come right off t'-morrer. I can't promise nothin', Mis' Wadham, but I'll find out, an' I'll do th' best I can."

"Thank you, Chick. I knew you would." She turned to John Killian, and regarded him with a smile of amusement. "I don't know just what we are going to do about you, John," she said. "You might be prepared for some kind of light supper when the doctor has gone. Perhaps," she added, "we can persuade the doctor to join us at our repast. We'll see."

He hesitated. "I should be glad," he said, "to be of some help. If you think that I would not be a

hindrance — can't I get the aforesaid light supper?"

Madame Wadham laughed aloud. "Delicious!" she cried. "It is a bargain. You rummage around and see what you can find, and give us anything you please. We could go into Cynthia's, but I like this way better. In the expressive language used by my grandson, go to it, John. I'll provide an apron if you want one. Now let 's see how Baxter gets on."

Mr. Chick had been listening to this interchange of ideas, his mouth almost hanging open with astonishment. "Jumpin' Jiminy!" he said under his breath, as he turned to go down to his duties at the furnace. "Jumpin' Jiminy!"

"What did our friend Chick say?" Mr. Killian asked. "I'm not sure that I heard him."

"Probably you did," Madame Wadham replied. She repeated it. "It was expressive of slight surprise, I judge."

"Very likely," he said dryly. Then they laughed together, and went into the kitchen.

It was many years since Mr. Killian had prepared a light supper. He remembered dimly, however, that the most annoying thing — really the hardest thing about such a duty was that he never knew where anything was. So he began operations with a thorough investigation. It was while he was seeing what there was in the kitchen closet, and where it was, that he heard a delighted chuckle from Baxter. So Madame Wadham had been telling on him, he supposed. Well, what if she had? It did nobody any

harm. If Baxter, a poor crippled old woman with a broken leg which had not yet been set, could get amusement enough out of the fact to make her laugh in spite of the pain she must be in, she was welcome. He smiled to himself and went on with his investigation; but he did wish that people would arrange things properly, and label them plainly, so that other people did not have to look into every paper bag and secondhand baking-powder tin, and perhaps have to taste, at that.

Mr. Chick came up from the cellar, stood and stared for a moment, and went out with a parting "Jumpin' Jiminy!" He stumped away at a lively pace, pausing at the corner just long enough to communicate his news to Billy Druce, whom he found loafing in front of his gate. Billy thanked him, saying that he would tell his mother and the rest, and that he would go over right away.

"'T'll be wuth y'r while," responded Mr. Chick. "Y' 'll see somethin' 't 'll s'prise you, mebbe. They's all in th' kitchen."

At the corner of the garden fence where the path made off to Mr. Tumbleberry's residence Mr. Chick saw a tall, shambling figure.

"Hello, Tum!" he called.

Mr. Tumbleberry drew up. He seemed to be shivering with the cold, although most people would have said that it was mild, for winter weather, and a glorious night. It was cloudless, there were limitless stars shining, which Mr. Chick would have been

earnestly regarding and wondering about under other circumstances; and it was but a few degrees below freezing.

"Hello, Chick!" Mr. Tumbleberry said in a booming tremolo. "Y' 're in a hurry, I think likely fr'm y'r actions."

"Yes, I be," said Mr. Chick. "Mis' Baxter 's fell an' broke 'er leg, an' I got t' hurry home."

"F'r fear 'Rissa 's caught th' complaint, an' broke her leg too," Mr. Tumbleberry roared in a shaking voice. "'T 'd take more 'n a fall t' break 'Rissa's pianner legs, Chick, so don't y' be afraid. Y' 'll find 'er whole when y' git home, I should n't wonder a mite. Was Mis' Baxter's leg broke short off? D' you carry 'er in, an' then go back an' take in 'er leg?"

"'Course I did n't," Mr. Chick remonstrated, his choler rising, "an' y' know it mighty well. Folks's legs don't break like a stick o' candy. You —"

"I can't see y'r face," Mr. Tumbleberry interrupted, "'r leastways not clear, it's so dark. But I know jest 's well 's I want to 't it's a-gittin' red. You ought t' be more careful, Chick. This weather ain't no pertection. I've see folks go off in freezin' weather jest 's quick 's when it's b'ilin' hot."

"*What* folks've you see go off?" challenged Mr. Chick. "You jest name 'em. I don't b'lieve you've see any."

"Well, Chick, I ain't a-goin' t' discourage y' none. 'F I was t' go an' name all th' folks I've see go off

sudden, y' would n't have no courage left. I thought y' was in a hurry. An' y' was so excited I thought 't it must be somethin' onusual 'd happened. 'T ain't nothin' onusual f'r folks t' snap a leg. 'T happens every day."

"Well, I must be goin'," said Mr. Chick, whose choler had disappeared in the natural course of events. "Good-bye, Tum." He started off, but had not gone far when he bethought him of the day. "Merry Christmas, Tum!" he called.

Mr. Tumbleberry laughed a hollow, shaky laugh. "Merry Christmas!" he boomed. "'F y' want I sh'd say it," he added in a lowered voice, "I'll say it t' oblige you. 'S fur 's I'm concerned they ain't nothin' into it, not a mite. Might 's well say Baa, Baa, black sheep, have y' any wool? An' I ain't."

With another hollow laugh, which ended in a fit of coughing, Mr. Tumbleberry turned once more into the path leading to his castle. He thought of Mr. Chick on his way to warmth and plenty, and for the moment his thoughts were bitter.

"'F I was t' go an' break my leg," he muttered, "I might lay here until doomsday 'r till I froze t' death, f'r all the difference it 'd make t' anybody, even t' Chick. Well," he added grimly, stooping at the corner to grope for the key, "I ain't a-goin' t' break m' leg."

At the moment Mr. Chick had nearly reached his warmth and plenty. He went around to the kitchen door and found Clarissa busy carrying in the supper.

"You're a little late, Chick," she observed pleasantly. "Better get washed up. Never mind about helping now."

Again he announced that Baxter had broken her leg.

"I'm sorry," she said without even stopping in her journey to the dining-room. "There's nothing I can do right now, I suppose. You can tell me all about it after supper, when we do the dishes."

Mr. Chick knew there was no appeal; but when supper was over and they two were "doing" the dishes, he gave her all the details that he knew, and he told her of Madame Wadham's needs.

"It's too bad," she said thoughtfully. "Baxter's an old woman. She may never get on her feet again, and I suppose Mrs. Wadham'll take care of her as long as she lives, whether she's ever able to do a hand's turn or not. She needs a sensible, strong girl, able to handle Baxter without hurting her. And Mrs. Wadham's an old woman, too, whatever you may say."

"Yeah," answered Mr. Chick, as he polished a plate over and over, "she is. They ain't no doubt about it, but she's spry 's they make 'em."

"She ought not to have that to do," said Clarissa decidedly. "It's heavy work for a woman of her age, and not suited to her. I've got a cousin," she added, "who might do. You've never seen her. She 's about twenty, younger than I am," — she laughed — "and better looking."

Mr. Chick interrupted, mumbling that Clarissa was good enough looking, and that he liked her looks. He grew redder and redder.

She looked at him and gave one of her clear contralto laughs. "Thank you, Chick," she said. "You're a good man. Well, perhaps I could get my cousin on here. I think I'll go up and see Mrs. Wadham after breakfast to-morrow. When you go up in the morning you tell her that I'll come up as soon as I get the breakfast things out of the way."

"Will you?" said Mr. Chick gratefully. "That's good o' you, 'Rissa. I kind o' thought y' 'd know somethin' 'r another t' do. Y' ought t' 'a' seen 'em when I left. Ol' Killian was a-gittin' supper, 'r was a-goin' t' git it, an' was a-snoopin' round 'n th' kitchen closet 'th an apron over his clo'es. 'T was all I c'd do not t' laugh 'n 'is face."

"Killian!" Clarissa cried. "Was he? I'd never have thought it of him. Killian!"

"Y' know," Mr. Chick explained, "Mis' Wadham's got 'im tamed — well tamed now."

"I should think she had," said Clarissa.

At that moment Mr. Killian was about taking his leave of Madame Wadham, and incidentally of all the Druces and the doctor.

"We're very much obliged to you, John," said Madame Wadham, "infinitely obliged. We've had a fine supper, and Baxter's comfortable, and I'm happy."

"I'm no expert in the kitchen," he said deprecat-

ingly. "I make no pretense in that respect. I ought to apologize to the rest for insisting upon doing it all myself. But I'm very glad that Baxter is doing well."

Madame Wadham went to the door with him. "We're getting on very well, you and I, John," she said in his ear, "because you're afraid to death of me. Are n't you?"

He smiled. "Not so desperately afraid," he said, "now," he added. "I may have been at first. Confession is good for the soul. Good-night."

She gave him her hand. "Good-night," she said. "Be careful in crossing. Don't slip. We don't want you to break your leg."

CHAPTER XIV

BAXTER was tired; so tired that it did not seem as if she ever would be rested; so tired that it did not seem to matter whether she was ever rested or not. Nothing mattered. But she was always cheerful, almost merry, and she tried to think it mattered — that something mattered.

"Clarissa," she called gently, "do you suppose you could turn me?"

"Of course I can," was the cheerful reply. "Don't I do it without the least trouble in the world?"

"You do, bless you! I'm sorry to be such a bother."

Clarissa laughed her rich contralto laugh. "You're no bother. I'll be there right away. I can't leave this for a couple of seconds."

Baxter smiled and sighed contentedly. Almost before the sigh was finished Clarissa's massive figure was at her bedside. She threw down the bedclothes, and turned Baxter as lightly and gently as if she were thistledown, making sure that her leg, swathed in its plaster cast, was under no strain and was properly supported. She covered the patient and tucked the clothes in.

"There, mother Baxter," she said, patting her shoulder gently. "Did I hurt you?" Baxter smiled and shook her head. "Comfortable?" Baxter

nodded. "I must get back to my dessert. It might fall or I'd stay. Speak if you want anything. I shall be in the kitchen, and it won't bother me to talk."

"Clarissa," said Baxter, "you're the blessing of God. You know the doctor says you ought to be a nurse; that you're the best nurse he ever had."

"Does he?" Clarissa asked in surprise. "That's good of him, but nursing's too easy, with nothing else to take up my time. I like plenty of work. It's almost too easy here. I miss the work at Mrs. Keep's."

"But, Clarissa," Baxter said in alarm, "you're not thinking of going back! Madame Wadham —"

Clarissa laughed. "There's no danger. Madame Wadham's fine, and it would be ungrateful, and I'd be a fool to go. My cousin's doing well there, and I get in every day or two to tell her about anything she does n't know. Oh, no, mother Baxter, I've no idea of going — anywhere."

Baxter breathed a long sigh of relief. "Well, I'm glad!"

True to her word, as was her custom, Clarissa had come to see Madame Wadham on the morning after Baxter's accident; and, on hearing her whole plight, she had agreed to help her out at once. She had sent for her cousin, with the thought of putting her at Madame Wadham's when she came. Meanwhile Clarissa had done the work at both houses, besides caring for Baxter. When the cousin arrived she

proved to be so much less sturdy that Clarissa had made up her mind at once that she would not do for Baxter, and had come herself. Madame Wadham was delighted, and had fixed Clarissa's wages at twice the amount Mrs. Keep paid her; although, to Clarissa, that was a minor consideration. There was but one thing that troubled her: she had seen that the manners and methods of Mrs. Keep were not those of Madame Wadham. But, with Baxter's willing help, that matter was rapidly being amended.

Baxter, from her pillow, had a view out of the window, over the deserted garden. Snow had been falling all night and through the morning. Now there were only a few straggling flakes.

"Clarissa," she said, "it's almost stopped snowing. Chick ought to be here pretty soon to shovel, or there'll be no getting out for anybody."

"Do you think a little thing like snow would keep Madame Wadham in if she wanted to go out?" Clarissa asked. Baxter only laughed. "Unless it was up to her neck," Clarissa added, "and perhaps not then. But you need n't worry. Chick's reliable, and if he should n't come I'll do it myself."

"Could you? It's deep."

"Oh, mercy, yes. I've done it lots of times. It's nothing."

"Nothing!" said Baxter. "And when I've tried, the best I can do is a little wobbly path from the front door to the gate. You're a wonder, Clarissa. You're strong and gentle and deft and kind. I often

think that it's those that are strongest that are the gentlest. And you're cheery, and I'd rather hear your voice than an orchestry. There's more music in it to my mind. There! That's what I think."

Clarissa laughed. "Mercy, mother Baxter! But you forgot one thing. My beauty. I've no doubt that Tumbleberry says my 'looks are ag'in me.' I wish they were n't, truly. No matter what a girl may say, she always cares."

"I like your looks," Baxter maintained stoutly. "I think you're handsome, and I know you're a sight for sore eyes. What do you care what Tumbleberry says? Tumbleberry! I'd bet that Chick would say the same that I say. Now, Clarissa, you need n't fish any more, for I'm not going to give you any more compliments. I would n't make you vain."

Clarissa laughed again. "I guess I know what Chick thinks. He is n't any champion beauty himself. He'd never take a prize for that. But I shall never be vain on account of looks." At a slight noise outside she looked up. "Here's Chick now — and Tumbleberry too. Will wonders never cease? I wonder what it is that he's got under his hat. It's something more than shovelling snow. You can bet on that. I saw him this morning when I was going to Mrs. Keep's. It was snowing, of course, but it was n't cold. I thought it was lovely weather, but Tumbleberry was all huddled up in his overcoat, and did n't see me. I don't believe that man's warm

from fall to spring. I know he does n't get enough to eat, but why should he? If he starves to death, let him, lazy, good-for-nothing loafer! Why should other people feed him?"

"Oh, Clarissa!" Baxter remonstrated. "You know you would n't let him starve. I know you better than that."

"Well," said Clarissa with venom, "he deserves to. He never does a hand's turn of work, and he's always trying to persuade Chick not to. I know him."

Baxter chuckled quietly, but said nothing. She had known Mr. Tumbleberry longer than Clarissa had — known him in all his phases. When Clarissa had seen him, a couple of hours earlier, he had been ploughing through the snow, on his way to the post-office and store. It was not that he had the least expectation of finding any mail for himself, or that he would even take the trouble to ask for it. If a miracle of that sort should happen, Lem would lose no time in informing him of it. Neither did Mr. Tumbleberry expect that the store would be very comfortable. It was never very comfortable. To-day it would be even less so than usual; but it would be more comfortable than his residence, which he had just left, and which was the only other retreat open to him. Mr. Tumbleberry did not live in luxury. For the greater part of the winter he lived in considerable discomfort — or worse.

It was early in February. The summer was his

time. He looked ill-nourished at all times, but in February one saw Mr. Tumbleberry at his worst. As he walked, his long overcoat, once heavy, now worn and faded to a greenish cast, hung upon his lank figure and flapped about his legs like a flag on a pole. Its collar was turned up about his ears, the flap of his cloth cap was turned down to meet his collar, and he had his hands thrust deep in to the bottoms of his pockets. His shoulders were hunched together, there was a scowl of positive pain between his eyes, and now and then, as he shambled on, he shivered. It was not cold, according to the thermometer, but Mr. Tumbleberry did not care for thermometers. They were never an index of his feelings. *He* was cold. Thermometers were always lying.

He hurried a little. He was almost at the store. He stumbled over the uncleared, trampled space before the door, stumbled up the two wooden steps, opened the door and stumbled in.

He stood still for a moment, catching his breath, then he stamped a little, with simulated vigor, to rid himself of the snow on his feet and the nether parts of his long legs. Then he shook with a vigor which was not simulated. He made Lem think of a horse twitching off a fly, or a dog just out of the water. His long overcoat shivered convulsively from shoulder to tails.

Lem smiled quietly. "Shut the door, Tum."

Lem uttered this formula without feeling. He might have been talking in his sleep.

Mr. Tumbleberry was still hanging on to the latch of the door absent-mindedly, and holding the door open. He looked over at Lem, busy at the shelf beside the small enclosure within which none but sworn employees of the government might enter.

"Sure I will, Lem," he said with an attempt at heartiness.

His voice, deep-rolling and rumbling, seemed to come from his boots or thereabouts, gathering volume as it came; but it shook.

"Y' ought t' have one o' these 'ere spring contraptions on y'r door, Lem, so's it'll shut 'f itself," he continued.

"You let go of it, Tum, and it'll shut fast enough," said Lem dryly. "I put a door-check on in the fall. Had to. You fellers always left it open. But the rest of 'em don't *hold* it open."

Mr. Tumbleberry laughed a little, a deep rumble. "Why, so I be," he said. "Must be a-gittin' absent-minded, Lem." He let go the latch and the door shut promptly. He looked the counter over. "Ain't y' got y'r papers yet? You ain't sold 'em all out? All th' Boston papers gone?"

Lem made no move. "I've got some left. Did you want one? Two cents, Tum."

"Gold?" Mr. Tumbleberry laughed. "I 's lookin' f'r th' store copy."

"It's in there," Lem returned with a jerk of his head toward the back room, "if there's anything left of it."

With a wave of his hand in farewell Mr. Tumbleberry strode loosely to the door of the back room and opened it.

He was greeted by the odor of chilly dampness and of the warmed-over rubber boots which decorated the railing of the stove. Mingled with these cheering smells there could be detected by a keen-scented observer the fragrance of crackers in an open barrel behind the counter, of flour in bags heaped high, of molasses cookies, of spices — faint, very — of several other things which could not be identified, and of commercial fertilizer. The observer did not need to be of extraordinary keenness of scent to identify that. Three men sat around the stove, silent at the moment of Mr. Tumbleberry's entrance, and on the floor behind the tipped-up chairs were scattered several crumpled sections of newspaper. The three men turned their heads to gaze at Mr. Tumbleberry. He retrieved the newspaper and pulled up an empty box close to the stove. There were no more chairs. He seated himself with deliberation on the box, raised his feet to the rail of the stove, bent his long legs, rested his elbows on this knees, and proceeded to scan the columns of the paper held between his hands.

"What 's the news, Tum?"

Mr. Tumbleberry glanced up, looked impersonally at the speaker, and looked down again.

"I ain't had time t' see no news yet, Arthur," he boomed gently. His voice was steady, for he was be-

ginning to get warm. "Y' ought t' know what news they is. By all th' signs eight 'r ten people 've read this identicle sheet 'fore I got hold 'f th' remains. 'F y' ain't read it, 't ain't because y' did n't have no chancet."

"What's th' glass say, Tum?"

Mr. Tumbleberry did not look up. "I ain't seen no ther'ometer, Henry. Ther'ometers ain't much use t' me. I know when I'm cold. I'm ther'ometer enough f'r me."

Henry laughed. "Built for one, was n't you, Tum? Veins full o' quicksilver?"

"Nothin' quick in Tum's veins," said Arthur, "an' no silver about him, I'll bet. But I think Tum 'd look good set up f'r a glass just outside Lem's door. When anybody wanted to know what the glass said, Tum 'd say it. I'll bet it 'd always be below zero, though. Would n't it, Tum?"

Mr. Tumbleberry did not smile, but continued to gaze at the paper. "Y' can't expect, Arthur," he rumbled in his softest tones, "'t a man 'd be warm in winter. I don't expect it, an' I ain't."

Arthur glanced out of the window. The window was pretty dirty, but even through its crusted panes the snow could be seen falling thickly.

"It's snowin' pretty hard," he observed, "but it ain't cold."

"That depends, Arthur," Mr. Tumbleberry rejoined, "on what y' call cold. 'F they's an Esk'mo here, I should n't wonder a mite but what y' c'd see

'm out there a-wallerin' 'n th' snow, a-strippin' off 'is union suit like as not, an' 'is tongue hangin' out an' he a-pantin' 'th th' heat. But I ain't no Esk'mo."

They all laughed gently.

"Why don't you do somethin' t' stir y'r blood, Tum? Y' 'd be warmer."

Mr. Tumbleberry looked benevolently at the speaker. "What kind o' somethin' 're you a-mentionin' of, George?"

"Oh, anythin' to get y'r blood movin'. 'Most any kind o' work 'd do. Shovellin' snow 's better 'n nothin'. *I* favor choppin' wood."

"I ain't heard o' no job o' wood-choppin', George, an' I have t' save my stren'th. 'F you 's six foot four an' 's thin 's I be, y' would n't talk about doin' work jest t' stir y'r blood. An' shovellin' 's terrible hard on m' back, 'cause I 'd have t' stoop so fur."

"You 'd get used to it, Tum."

Mr. Tumbleberry shook his head. "I don' know," he said. "I don' know 's I want t' git used t' it. I *had* thought some o' shovellin' snow, but 't ain't no use t' shovel snow when 't 's snowin' so terrible hard."

"'T would warm y' up just the same," George insisted, "whether it's snowin' 'r whether 't ain't."

"'T don't seem right," said Mr. Tumbleberry, shaking his head again, "t' waste m' labor. 'F 't was t' stop snowin', an' I 's t' meet up 'th Chick, now, I 'd like t' consider it."

The assembled company saw no likelihood of

getting further entertainment out of Mr. Tumbleberry, and the talk died a natural death. There was no sound in that back room except the rustle of the paper in Mr. Tumbleberry's hands as he slowly spelled out the words, or the occasional dull impact as one of the three others spat into the sawdust. After thus sitting in silence for an hour, Arthur got up and went out.

Henry roused himself, and glanced out of the window. "It seems to be light'nin' up a little," he remarked; and after nearly half an hour more he departed.

George was left with Mr. Tumbleberry. He peered out of the window.

"It's almost stopped snowin', Tum," he said.

"Yeah," Mr. Tumbleberry boomed cheerfully. "It'll stop 'n th' course o' time, I should n't wonder a mite."

"Never was but one storm 't did n't," said George.

"An' that was this one," Mr. Tumbleberry said dryly. "Y' can't ketch me 'th an old one like that, George."

"I should n't wonder 'f Chick 'd be comin' along any time now. 'F y' watch f'r him, Tum, y' 'll catch him. Y' might get a job o' shovellin'."

"Yeah," said Mr. Tumbleberry again, without looking up.

There was silence for a few minutes. George looked out of the window again. He had a view of the sidewalk for some little distance up the hill.

"There's Chick comin' now," said George. "I know his fairy form. I'm goin' now, an' I'll tell him y' 're here, an' 't y' want to see him."

Mr. Tumbleberry roused himself at that. "Oh, George!" he bellowed. "Y' need n't t' tell him." But the door shut behind George. "Sho!" said Mr. Tumbleberry in disgust. So it befell that 'Rissa saw, from her kitchen window, the sight which had prompted her exclamation about wonders never ceasing.

Mr. Chick, ruddy and smiling, and looking more like a tub than ever, waded up to the door, but made no move to go in. Mr. Tumbleberry, in his sagging old overcoat and cap with the ear flaps turned down, looking sour and thinner than ever and pinched with cold and hunger, waded after him. Mr. Chick, with his short, stout legs, had almost ploughed a path already, so that Mr. Tumbleberry, with his long strides, had no difficulty in keeping fairly clear of snow as he followed. Mr. Chick was plastered with snow up to his knees.

"What's th' matter, Chick?" boomed Mr. Tumbleberry as he approached. "Ain't y' a-goin' in 'r what is it?"

"'Course I ain't a-goin' in," Mr. Chick replied. "We come up here t' shovel Mis' Wadham out. They ain't no snow 'n th' kitchen."

"Don't y' think y' better git warmed up before y' begin? If y' ask me, I sh'd think y' 'd ought t' take or'nery precautions. A man o' your build —"

"Well," Mr. Chick interrupted with some asperity, "I ain't a-goin' t' take no percautions. Y' 'll git warm enough shovellin'. Like 's not I 'll have t' throw off m' overcoat 'fore I git fur, mebbe."

Mr. Tumbleberry looked dejected. He sighed. "Jest 's y' like, Chick," he said. "Have it y'r own way. I ain't a-goin' t' throw off m' overcoat, I think likely. You go ahead an' shovel, an' I 'll foller along after you an' sweep it clean."

Mr. Chick glared at Mr. Tumbleberry without speaking. Then he took his shovel from his shoulder, and cleared the doorstone.

"Where's y'r broom, Tum?" he asked, suddenly bethinking him of the lack of that necessary article.

"I did n't make out t' git me a broom," Mr. Tumbleberry bellowed. "I 'll have t' git me one. 'Rissa 'll len' me one I should n't wonder a mite, seein' 's it's her walk. Jest be shovellin', Chick, an' git a mite of a ways along, so 's I won't have to be standin' 'round 'n th' cold, waitin' f'r you. I 'll git th' broom an' be ready t' foller along after you 'fore y' 've got fur."

Mr. Chick grunted with indignation, glared at Mr. Tumbleberry, and seemed about to speak; but he thought better of it, took up his shovel again, and bent to his work.

Mr. Tumbleberry regarded him for a moment, and thought it wise to give some explanation.

"Y' see, Chick," he said in resounding tones, "the reason I said f'r you t' shovel an' me t' take

th' broom to it is that you don't have t' bend y'r back much 'f any, shovellin'. Y' c'n take a shovelful o' snow mighty nigh standin' up straight. But I sh'd have t' bend pretty nigh double, an' it's harder f'r me t' take a shovelful o' snow, bendin' nigh double, 'n what 't is f'r you, standin' straight. You know it's harder, but a broom, now, 's got such a long handle 't I c'n work it 'thout bendin' s' much. Now I'll jest knock on th' door an' see —"

Mr. Tumbleberry had been standing on the doorstone, his hand raised to knock. At that moment the door was opened, and a broom was thrust into his waiting hand. Then the door closed again. Mr. Tumbleberry looked surprised. He glanced at the broom handle, then at the door. "Sho!" he muttered. Then he sighed and took out after Mr. Chick.

"Clarissa," he remarked to nobody in particular, "must 'a' heard me, 'r seen 't I needed a broom, so sh' handed m' one. 'S kind 'f her. 'N fact, her kindness 's only exceeded b' th' size 'f her feet, 's th' feller says."

Mr. Chick straightened up and snorted. He glared at Mr. Tumbleberry.

That gentleman was aware of the glare, although he was not looking at Mr. Chick. "Now, Chick," he bellowed cheerfully, "I would n't go an' git mad 'f I was you. It don't do you no good, and it don't do me no harm. Y' git mad s' easy 't nobody can't pay no attention to it. Laugh an' th' world laughs with

you. Git mad an' nobody cares a hang. I heard a feller say that," Mr. Tumbleberry added modestly, "'n a lecture 'bout a month ago."

"Lecture!" exclaimed Mr. Chick, straightening up again and staring. "D' you go t' a lecture, Tum? What 'd y' go t' a lecture for? In th' Town Hall?"

"In th' Town Hall," replied Mr. Tumbleberry, leaning on his broom. "I went b'cause I wanted t' hear what th' feller had t' say. What do folks ginerally go t' lectures for? It *might* be wuth listenin' to. Y' never c'n tell."

"'T wa'n't free," Mr. Chick objected. "Th' ain't give no free lectures this winter. How 'd y' git in?"

"I got me a ticket," said Mr. Tumbleberry noncommittally. He had found it. "Th' wa'n't no reserve' seats, s' I went early. 'T was one o' them cold nights, an' 't was warm there."

Mr. Chick grunted and began shovelling again. Mr. Tumbleberry waved the broom gently after him. There was no further conversation until the shovelling was done. Then Mr. Tumbleberry went back to return the broom, and was taken with a violent fit of coughing just outside the kitchen door.

The door opened. Clarissa took the broom but blocked the entrance, so that Mr. Tumbleberry, thin as he was, was unable to squeeze by her.

"I can't let you come in, Tum," she said. "Mrs. Baxter's sick in the next room." She was taking no chances on that cough.

"All right, 'Rissa," Mr. Tumbleberry rumbled

cheerfully. "Jest 's you say. But ain't they no place where it's a little mite warm 't I c'n wait in while Chick fixes th' furnace?"

"You can wait in the cellar. Go down the cellarway — the bulkhead." Mr. Tumbleberry had turned away, and the kitchen door had almost shut. It opened again. "Stop here a minute as you go, Tumbleberry," Clarissa added hastily. "I'll have something for you."

"Jest 's you say," said Mr. Tumbleberry.

There was a chuckle from Baxter. "I knew you could n't do it, Clarissa," she said.

"I can't let such a peaked-looking creature go," Clarissa answered impatiently. "I'd feed a stray dog that looked as hungry as he does — and I'd rather. But he does n't deserve it. I hate to give him good food, although any old scraps he'd take — if we had 'em."

She made up a package, wrapping it in a newspaper. Meanwhile Mr. Tumbleberry had seated himself on an ash can in the cellar.

"Don't y' hurry y'rself none, Chick," he said. "Take y'r time. I c'd stay here an hour 'r so, I think likely. I ain't got ary engagement this afternoon. I ain't in no hurry 'r whatever."

CHAPTER XV

MADAME WADHAM was getting to like Mr. Killian more and more. It was only proper human companionship that he had needed, she told herself, with somebody over whom he had no authority and who was not afraid of him; somebody who was a little stronger than he; somebody who would overrule him when that was necessary, and that remorselessly; in short, with herself, Madame Wadham. Under her guidance he would blossom into the perfect gentleman he must have been before she had known him, and into the perfect companion he had never been. She took great satisfaction in that certainty, and unconsciously she took great credit — to herself alone — for that second blossoming, of which she saw the sure signs, pure white buds of great size on the scarred trunk. Possibly she deserved the credit, the whole of it.

As a further stage in his training she took him about with her in the evenings, into the Druces', to what few lectures they had in the village, into the city, seven miles away, to concerts and the theatre — to opera once, and once in a while to the movies. He submitted, even to the movies, without a word. They had to go in the electric cars, for there was no other kind of car available. They were always to be seen together on such occasions. Madame Wadham

cared nothing for that, one way or the other, but she rejoiced in her new-found freedom, and meant to take the fullest advantage of it. She had not known such complete freedom for years, and she was as eager as a young girl to go about.

To be sure, at first Mr. Killian had made some feeble objection to accepting her invitations, but she overruled him at once, and he liked it. He tried to return her invitations, but always found that she had the tickets already "sewed up," to use Billy Druce's expression. Incidentally, she was quite familiar with her grandson's expressions. At last they compromised, and he was allowed to pay for his own tickets; "Dutch treat," as she said. She even went after him in the forenoons, occasionally, interrupting whatever private and personal matters he was so busily engaged upon — and he liked that, too.

He always went when she asked him, whatever fuss he might have been tempted to make. She had only to whistle, metaphorically, or even to beckon, and he came, although it is not to be supposed that that point was reached at a blow; it took a couple of weeks, perhaps. They took walks together which, one would think, were too long for an old woman, but she came through better than he did. They were always within sight of the bay, those walks, along the road by the shore, or when the shore was sufficiently free of ice, along the shore itself. She liked a wide prospect: on the heights, if there had

been any heights, or the shore, with the bay spread out before her; water or ice, it did not matter, so long as one could see far. There was much ice upon the shore. The harbor froze over, and they walked upon its frozen surface. Once they almost fell in through rotten ice. It had been warmer for two days, and the tide still ran.

That experience was almost too much for him, but she laughed him out of it. "Thank you, John," she said. "It is pleasant to have anybody anxious about an old woman, but you need not be disturbed. I had been noticing that the ice was getting pretty wet, and I thought it was about time to turn back. Then came that soft crack, and we turned and scrambled, and here we are. Just suppose that I had had to rescue you!" She laughed without a tremor. "And I could, I have n't a doubt."

They were walking rather fast, and he was very sober. "I shall not feel easy," he said, "until we get ashore. Can you hurry?"

"Yes, if you like."

They were ashore within a few minutes, and he breathed easier. "Madame Wadham," he said slowly, "that was too close for pleasure. We will not try that again. Hereafter we walk upon the ground."

She looked amused. "Very well," she said. "Hereafter we walk upon the ground. I think it would be as well. But I am thankful that it was not Baxter who almost got caught out there."

"How does Baxter get on?" he asked. "She ought to be getting up by this time."

"She should be. I'm worried about Baxter. Her bones don't seem to be knitting well. I'm afraid they don't mend." She sighed. "Well, we can only wait and see."

CHAPTER XVI

BAXTER'S old bones did not seem to mend. Although it had got to be March, she still lay there, unable to get up except for brief periods when Clarissa lifted her like a baby, and put her into an armchair, with her leg, in its plaster cast, stretched out on a pillow before her. Even so, she soon tired, and Clarissa lifted her once more — she was pitifully light — and laid her very gently in her bed again. She could not bear any weight at all on her broken leg. It was knitting very slowly and imperfectly, and to Madame Wadham and Clarissa it was beginning to seem possible — even probable — that she might be a permanent invalid, if it turned out no worse than that. Poor old Baxter! There was no knowing what she thought about it, but she was uncomplaining, and cheerful and merry in her quiet way, as she was always.

Mr. Chick had got into the habit of stopping in at the kitchen on the way from his duties in the cellar, ostensibly to ask after Baxter's health, and perhaps to exchange some words with her through her open door. Baxter occasionally tried some gentle banter, but Mr. Chick was not strong on banter, and made a mess of it whenever he tried it. More often than not he did not realize that it was banter, and when he did, it made him uncomfortable. Clarissa laughed

at him on such occasions, and that made it worse; and Mr. Chick always got redder and redder, and floundered badly, and got deeper and deeper in the mud, after the fashion approved for flounderers. When he was reduced to speechless embarrassment Clarissa came to his rescue.

"Never you mind, Chick," she said, still smiling. "If she bothers you too much I'll see that she stops. I've got her trained. I can make her do whatever I say. If I should say that I would n't do things for her —"

"Oh, Clarissa!" Baxter laughed. "You would n't be so cruel!"

"You don't know, mother Baxter, how cruel I can be. If you don't treat Chick respectfully —"

"I'll be as respectful as I can be. I'd bow and scrape, but I can't very well."

All this did not tend to make Mr. Chick more comfortable. "I wish 't I could take it th' way Tum would," he said plaintively. "He'd know how. An' I don't have no comfort up t' Mis' Keep's no more, neither."

Clarissa bristled. "What!" she said. "Is n't Annie good to you? I'll speak to her about it. My cousin, and I got her the place! Don't they feed you well? What is it, Chick?"

"Oh, th' feed me well," Mr. Chick hastened to reply. "I ain't no complaint t' make about th' food. An' Annie 's all right, 's fur 's that goes. 'T ain't none o' them things. I ain't complainin' exactly.

But m' evenin's, now, they ain't none too good. I can't set 'th Annie."

"Why not?" Clarissa seemed to be amused. "What's the matter with Annie? Do other men come and make it uncomfortable for you?"

"No," said Mr. Chick, showing a tendency to become a rocking-horse, "no, they don't, not wuth mentionin'. 'Course, th' is a man 'r two 't comes, but Annie don't have no truck 'th 'em. 'T ain't that."

"Well," asked Clarissa impatiently, "what is it, then? Is n't Annie good looking enough for you? She's ever so much better looking than I am."

"Mebbe she is," said the troubled Mr. Chick, teetering back and forth. "I ain't sayin' she ain't. But your looks is good enough f'r me. I guess th' matter is, 'Rissa, 't you ain't there no more."

"Oh, my goodness!" called Baxter, laughing softly. "I don't know but you'd better shut my door, Clarissa. I don't want to overhear what I should n't."

Clarissa laughed. It was always a joy to hear her laugh. "I guess there's no need, mother Baxter. Chick is n't going to say anything that he would n't as lief you'd hear, and I'm not. Are you, Chick?"

Mr. Chick was not prepared to take advantage of this opening. He hesitated. "No," he said finally, "I don' know's I be. No, I guess not. But 'Rissa an' me used t' have real comf'table evenin's, settin' there 'n th' kitchen, an' they ain't no more of 'em."

"The poor man's lonely, Clarissa," Baxter said. "I don't believe Madame Wadham would mind having him come here in the evenings. You ask her, — or I will. If this kitchen is n't as comfortable to sit in as that boarding-house kitchen I miss my guess."

Clarissa turned to Mr. Chick. "How would that suit you, Chick? I'd like it, too, although I have n't felt lonely, with mother Baxter right there in the next room."

"Do you know, Chick," asked Baxter, "what an angel she is? I don't know what I should do without her."

Mr. Chick did not reply, but his face was beaming. "Would you, 'Rissa? That'd be great."

"Sure I will, Chick. I'll speak to Madame Wadham about it the first time I see her. Look in tomorrow, and I'll tell you what she says."

Mr. Chick started home with a light heart and a beaming face, and he smiled to himself at every few steps. As the season wore on he had been feeling more and more discontented and dissatisfied, and he had just found out why. Well, there would be no more of that. To be sure, there was Baxter to act as a sort of invisible chaperon, and he could not exchange the lightest word with Clarissa that would not be overheard. He did not consciously contemplate saying anything which could not be overheard, especially by Baxter. She was a good old soul, and he liked her; a fact which, no doubt, would have been of the greatest comfort to her. If she could have

sat with them — but to have her in the next room with the door open — it seemed to him, vaguely, to be a sort of spying.

It was after six, and almost dark, when he saw Mr. Tumbleberry leaning on the fence at the point where his private walk to his residence branched off. Mr. Tumbleberry was very apt to be leaning on the fence at this point at about this time; as though, having been driven from his usual haunts, and got as far as this on his way home, he was reluctant to leave the main travelled road, and hated to go home. It was nothing to be surprised at. There were very many places pleasanter and more comfortable than Mr. Tumbleberry's home. Out-of-doors was one of them, accessible to Mr. Tumbleberry; and, unless there chanced to be a cold and biting wind, it was no colder than in his house, and the atmosphere much to be preferred. On this March evening it was not cold, and the ground was quite bare of snow and unfrozen. Altogether, most people would have preferred being out to being in Mr. Tumbleberry's house.

"Hello, Tum," said Mr. Chick, smiling in his excess of pleasure with the course of events in general.

"Hello, Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry boomed in deep and melancholy tones. "What's the joke? I heard y' laughin' t' y'rself 'fore I c'd see you. 'F th' 's an'thin' funny goin' on I sh'd like t' hear it. I ain't heard a thing t'-day 't a feller c'd crack a smile at."

"Th' ain't nothin' funny, 's fur 's I know," replied Mr. Chick, somewhat shamefaced. "I did n't know I was laughin', an' I don' know what I 's laughin' at. I'm late f'r supper, an' they ain't nothin' funny about that."

"Well, Chick," said Mr. Tumbleberry, "'f it wa'n't s' dark 't I can't see m' watch I'd tell y' th' time. 'S fur 's that goes I don't have t' keep close track o' th' time."

"Uh-huh," said Mr. Chick. "'T ain't no surprise t' me 't y' can't see it. I got t' be a-gittin' along."

"Hol' on a minute, they ain't no hurry. 'F y' 're late 't don't make no difference 'f y' 're a minute later. I' been lookin' at th' bo'ts, Chick. Fust thing y' know th' 'll be a-paintin' of 'em, an' if y' hear of any 't's got t' be painted I wish 't y' 'd jest say 't we'll do th' job. I could n't see 'em none too well f'r th' covers onto 'em. I wish 't they would n't nail them skirts s' clost so 's a man c'd see what 's in need 'f paintin' an' what ain't."

Mr. Chick snorted. "*We*'ll paint 'em! I'd like t' know how y' make that out. I ain't got time t' paint bo'ts."

"Now, don't y' go a-gittin' mad, Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry rumbled soothingly. "I figgered 't we c'd do th' job o' paintin' 's well 's anybody, an' we might 's well have it. 'F we git a job an' don't want t' do it, we c'n hire somebody an' make somethin' off his time. That's th' way these here *con*tractors

do. D' y' think they did n't charge no more 'n what th' paid?"

"Did n't think nothin' about it," said Mr. Chick shortly. "I got t' go, Tum, 'r I won't git no supper."

"Neither will I, Chick," retorted Mr. Tumbleberry more cheerfully than would have been expected. Mr. Chick grunted and started. "Jest speak f'r th' job," Mr. Tumbleberry boomed after him, "'f y' hear 'f any. I jest wanted t' put y' in mind of it."

Mr. Tumbleberry looked after him as he disappeared gradually into the darkness. "Sho!" he muttered. "He ain't a-goin' t' do nothin' about it, 't ain't likely. But mebbe he will."

Mr. Tumbleberry, sighing, walked slowly home, meditating upon the painting of boats. It chanced to be a lean interval with him. Lean days were becoming more frequent of late. He had eaten once that day, and comforted himself with the reflection that folks ate too much, anyway. But it was being forced upon him that he must find something which would bring in returns, and find it soon, or the fire within him, never brisk, would go out. He had a certain pride, strange as it may seem, which forbade his asking for food. He would starve first, and that did not seem impossible. If people offered him food — why, that was different, and he could take it without shame; but to ask for it — it seemed to mark the difference between the tramp and the independent householder. He would never do it.

Even if his plan of painting boats was successful, the season for engaging in that industry was more than a month in the future. A month is a long time. Men have fasted for longer than that, but Mr. Tumbleberry dismissed it with scant consideration.

"Could n't never make it," he muttered. "Mebbe they 's somethin' else I c'd paint, farm wagons, 'r ploughs, 'r harrers, 'r mowin' machines, 'r hay-tedders, 'r whatever. They 'd ought t' be painted." His mind was running too much to paint, and he realized it. "'R I 'd ought t' git my vessel ready f'r sea, an' go coastin' aroun'. They's most always somethin' 'r another waitin' t' be picked up, an' they's some lobster pots out, I should n't wonder a mite, 'r I might git some clams, I think likely." He even contemplated collecting garbage for those who wanted it collected, and taking it out beyond the breakwater in his vessel, and dumping it — after a proper examination; but he did not give voice to this project, although it seemed to promise well. Twenty-five cents a can — at least fifteen — for collecting, besides what came his way. Much encouraged, he fell asleep.

Mr. Tumbleberry started out the next morning after partaking of a frugal breakfast — an extremely frugal breakfast, but he had reached the point where he felt little hunger. He had had the firm intention of pursuing his plans of the evening before, but his vessel did not appeal to him. There was a good deal to be done to her, he reflected, and it might be

as well to follow up some of his other plans first. It was a lovely morning, sunny and warm as a May morning. He had but a vague idea of where he should go first, but he started on the street which ran by the head of the wharf. He had been coughing a good deal, and his walking, he found, was not perfectly steady, and he was a bit light-headed.

By the time he had reached the head of the wharf his intentions had — temporarily, of course — evaporated. He turned, without hesitation, down the wharf.

"I'll find me a good place," he muttered, "an' lay 'n th' sun a while. That'll set m' right."

There Mr. Chick found him, a couple of hours later, seated on a bench at the end of the building, basking in the bright sunshine, the gentle southwest breeze playing about him. He looked up.

"Hello, Chick," he boomed faintly. "I thought likely 't y' might turn up. I' been settin' here, waitin' f'r you. It's nice here," he added, "an' warm."

"I thought I might find y' here," observed Mr. Chick, settling himself uncomfortably on the end of the bench. He could not loll as Mr. Tumbleberry did, or his feet dangled several inches from the ground; and if he had his feet firmly planted on the ground, as he preferred, he had to sit well forward, almost on the front corner. "'T is warm an' nice here. Makes y' think 't spring 's due."

"'T's due, but it don't never git here," replied Mr. Tumbleberry. "When y' find a day like this,

y' better make th' most 'f it. I wish 't I could keep on settin' here till sundown, but I got engagements. I got t' be a-movin' 'fore long."

"I got t' be a-movin' 'fore that," remarked Mr. Chick. "I ain't none too comf'table on this here bench."

"No," Mr. Tumbleberry agreed. "Y'r shape 's ag'in y', Chick. Why 'n't y' find y'r block o' wood. Y'll find it around here some'eres I think likely."

Mr. Chick, after a brief search, brought his block of wood and seated himself upon it, with his back against the bench.

"My engagements," resumed Mr. Tumbleberry, "'f I was made like you, Chick, would be worryin' me an' preyin' on m' mind. I ain't noways inclined t' be keepin' of 'em."

Mr. Chick was looking down the harbor and picking a chip to pieces with his fingers. "I ain't surprised none," he said. "When was y' ever 'nclined t' keep 'em? Tell m' that."

"'T ain't 't I don't want t' keep 'em," Mr. Tumbleberry explained, "but I ain't really able. I got t' go an' see one man 'r another, an' 't don't seem 's if I c'd move."

"Might set up y'r office right here on th' wharf," Mr. Chick suggested, "an' make 'em come t' see you." Moved by a sudden thought, Mr. Chick turned quickly and gave Mr. Tumbleberry a searching glance. "What's th' matter 'th you, Tum? You sick?"

"No," Mr. Tumbleberry boomed cheerfully. "I don' know 's I am, not any wuss 'n common. No, I ain't sick, so t' say."

Mr. Chick had turned back again, and was once more regarding the harbor and the breakwater. He did not speak.

"I was thinkin' some o' fittin' out m' vessel," said Mr. Tumbleberry, breaking the silence. "Th' 's some repairs — one thing an' another — 't she's in need 'f. She 'd really ought t' have 'em done, an' I'd ought t' git 'er out."

"If this weather lasts. Th' good ship 'Sieve,'" continued Mr. Chick reflectively, "has been put int' th' water ag'in fr'm th' yard of Tumbleberry and Co. Sh' 'd ought t' drift down t' th' breakwater 'f sh' don't fall t' pieces on the way."

Mr. Tumbleberry took no notice of this pleasantry.

"Jest pick up what y' see 't she's in need of," he rumbled calmly, "an' bring 't around, Chick. Then we c'n be a-gittin' of 'er ready."

"Cuttin's o' bright tin fr'm Sam's," murmured Mr. Chick, "an' some secon'-hand rusty tacks." He laughed shrilly. "I'll tell y' Tum, th' 's more cuttin's in the fall. That's th' season f'r makin' new furnace pipes."

"Chick," said Mr. Tumbleberry solemnly, "I sh'd 'dvise y' t' cut out th' bootleggin' stuff. 'T ain't noways safe f'r a man 'f your build. Where 'y' been this mornin', anyway?"

"Up t' Mis' Wadham's." Mr. Chick slowly turned a deep red.

"That's jest 's bad f'r you," replied Mr. Tumbleberry. "But I ain't sayin' nothin', nor namin' no names."

Mr. Chick rose and regarded Mr. Tumbleberry belligerently. But his expression changed. Tum, he thought, was in need of something, and the need was rather more imperative than that of the "Sieve."

"I'll tell y', Tum," he said. "'T's such a nice day, I'm a mind t' see 'f Annie won't fix me a basket, an' I'll bring 't down here, an' we'll have a kind o' picnic."

"All right, Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry boomed heartily. "I wa'n't thinkin' o' havin' dinner yet, it's so comf'table here. I'll jest wait here f'r you."

"Mebbe sh' won't," said Mr. Chick, doubts beginning to assail him, "an' I can't come. But I'll try it."

"Don't make much difference t' me," Mr. Tumbleberry replied, waving his hand with a large gesture, "whether sh' does 'r whether sh' don't. I'll be a-waitin' here."

Mr. Chick hurried off, to return in due time carrying a large basket. Mr. Tumbleberry's engagements were forgotten.

CHAPTER XVII

APRIL had come and gone. Spurred at last by necessity, Mr. Tumbleberry had patched up his boat — his "vessel" — and on warm days he sailed the seas, or touched upon the shores, here and there, literally seeking what he might devour. He had just enough energy for that. He coughed a good deal, and it was no pretense. On cool days, or dull days, when the wind was chill or sharp, he preferred to go without food. He felt little hunger, and the season was opening and becoming more generous. With the coming of warmer weather, Mr. Tumbleberry was confident, the weakness which had oppressed him, so much so that he could not even catch a chogset, would pass.

He fished, to be sure, when he had a line and bait and the weather was not too cold to sit upon the stringpiece of the wharf, but he caught little.

On the Friday before Easter both he and Mr. Chick were seated on the stringpiece, fishing — with Mr. Chick's lines and Mr. Tumbleberry's bait. They had caught nothing, and the bait, which had consisted of four clams from a clambake, was almost gone.

"Too bad!" Mr. Tumbleberry remarked in his usual booming bass. "Th' ain't no more clams. I c'lected these where Harvey 'd had th' bake. I

could n't find no more. I scratched aroun' 'n th' rockweed an' 'mongst th' stones, but th' wa'n't no more. Y' know Harvey ain't none too lib'ral 'th th' clams. Then he come along, an' asked me what I wanted, an' I said 't I thought mebbe he'd want I sh'd throw these overboard int' th' harbor. So now th' 's throwed in th' harbor, an' we ain't got nothin' out 'f it but th' fun 'f fishin'."

"I ain't ketched a chogshead this year," Mr. Chick observed.

"Well, Chick," said Mr. Tumbleberry comfortingly, "I don' know 's I sh'd let that weigh on y'r mind. You will ketch one 'r two through th' gills 'r th' stummick 'soon 's they git t' runnin' good."

"Never ketched one through th' stummick," Mr. Chick began heatedly.

"Ne' mind, Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry continued calmly. "Y' will. They 's plenty o' time. Y' 'll ketch 'em most any way."

"'T was you 't ketched one through th' stummick," pursued Mr. Chick, his face beginning to show crimson. "Don't y' call t' mind th' one y' ketched that way las' fall?"

"No," said Mr. Tumbleberry soothingly. "Can't say 's I do. 'T must 'a' slipped m' mind. 'Don't make no difference, s' long 's I ketched 'im. Don't y' be s' almighty peppery, Chick. Y' 're a-gittin' red 's fire this minute. Th' 's one thing, 'f y' don't ketch no fish th' ain't no danger 'f y'r slippin' off th' stringpiece."

"Never slipped off 'n th' stringpiece," snapped Mr. Chick, glaring at Mr. Tumbleberry. "An' you know it."

"Well, Chick," replied that gentleman mildly, "I ain't sayin' y' did. Y' had n't ought t' git mad." He thought it best to change the subject. "What's th' news up t' Wadham's?"

Mr. Chick began to calm down at once. The color gradually died out of his face, but he did not answer Mr. Tumbleberry immediately.

"Ain't no news," he said at last. "Nothin' special. Jean's come f'r a visit, three 'r four days. An' Baxter don't git no better. They do say 't her bones 's rottin'."

"Bones rottin'!" Mr. Tumbleberry bellowed in surprise. "Sh' ain't dead, is she? How c'n 'er bones be rottin' an' she livin'?"

"I don' know," said Mr. Chick, shaking his head, "but 't 's what they say. I give 't t' you f'r what it's wuth."

"Ain't wuth nothin'," Mr. Tumbleberry rumbled, "stan's t' reason. Folks don't rot 'fore th' die. Doctors don' know nothin'."

Mr. Chick slowly shook his head again. "I don't know nothin' about it. 'T's what th' say."

"Sho!" said Mr. Tumbleberry. "Y' don't say!"

"Sh''s a real' good ol' soul," Mr. Chick observed thoughtfully, "Mis' Baxter is, don't give no more trouble 'n sh' c'n help, an' sh' 's good comp'ny."

"Don't make no ontimely interruptions," Mr.

Tumbleberry cut in, "when y''re passin' th' evenin' 'th 'Rissa?"

Sudden red again suffused Mr. Chick's cheek, and he glared at Mr. Tumbleberry. "What 'y' mean, Tum?" he demanded.

"Nothin'," said that gentleman carelessly. "Nothin' but jest what I said. Th' ain't no underlyin' meanin's in my remarks, Chick, an' y' had n't ought t' look f'r 'em. 'T only makes you mad an' gives y' a rush o' blood t' th' head. 'F I was built like you I sh'd be careful. I ain't s'spicious by natur', Chick, but when a man goes an' gits mad, every chancet he gits, I leave 't t' you — where they's s' much smoke th' 's some fire som'eres, I should n't wonder a mite. 'Stan's to reason."

Mr. Chick growled fiercely in his throat. He had his line all reeled in, and he jammed it into his pocket savagely.

"Y' better be careful, Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry suggested warningly. "'F y' ain't hooked th' hook int' th' reel, it'll ketch in y'r pocket, I think likely, an' I did n't see 't you hooked it int' th' reel. I'm jest sayin' it f'r y'r own good," he added hastily.

Mr. Chick made no reply, but sat on the stringpiece glaring into the swirling water. The tide was running strongly.

"How's Jean a-gittin' on 'th ol' Killian?" asked Mr. Tumbleberry suavely. "Does he pass any pleasant remarks, same 's he used to? 'F y' 're lookin'

f'r underlyin' meanin's, Chick, there's y'r mark. I ain't never heard anybody 't c'd hol' a candle t' him f'r remarks. 'T would 'a' made me laugh in 's face, 'f he'd ever said 'em to me, th' 's so jest exactly what he meant 'em to be."

"Uh-huh," Mr. Chick responded thoughtfully. "Th' 's fierce. It did n't make me laugh none wuth mentionin'. But he don't do it no more. Him an' Jean's sort o' shy."

"Shy!" Mr. Tumbleberry bellowed. "Sho! Y' don't say! You seen 'em?"

"No," Mr. Chick answered, "I ain't, so t' say, seen 'em, but 'Rissa tol' me."

"That remin's me 't I ain't asked how th' lovely 'Rissa is," said Mr. Tumbleberry in conversational tones, "an' I ain't seen 'er f'r some time. How's she a-gittin' along? 'S she losin' any flesh yet? 'S she begun t' fade away so 't y' 'd take notice t' it? I'll tell y', Chick, 't might save 'er 'f y' 's t' give her that photygrapht I's mentionin' of 'n connection 'th my matreemonial agency. Have y' give 't t' her, Chick? 'F y' ain't y' better. Jest have 't took 'th you stan'-in' up an' lookin' 's noble 's y' can manage. Stick y'r han' in y'r co't jest above th' second button, an' stick y'r chest out. Y'r chest don't mean y'r stum-mick, Chick."

Mr. Chick did not deign a reply. He got to his feet slowly, and turned away.

Mr. Tumbleberry regarded him with some aston-ishment. "What's th' matter now, Chick?" he

asked. "You a-gittin' mad ag'in? Is it because it's dinner time 'r what is it?"

Mr. Chick growled something about dinner.

Mr. Tumbleberry laughed, a hollow and a mirthless laugh. "Y''d ought t' turn Catholic f'r two 'three days, Chick. 'T would n't do y' no harm. Y' 've got enough food laid by an' into you t' last y' that long. Now, me, I've turned Catholic."

Mr. Chick regarded his friend in surprise. "What's that, Tum?"

Mr. Tumbleberry indulged in another mirthless laugh. "Yeah. I've turned. Y' know th' Catholics can't eat nothin' this Friday fr'm sunup t' sundown."

"Uh-huh," said Mr. Chick, gazing at Mr. Tumbleberry, who was gazing into the rapid tide. Then he walked away. Mr. Chick was in a hurry.

Mr. Tumbleberry continued to sit there for some time, turning his head once to look after the retreating form of Mr. Chick. Then he reeled in his line slowly. His hooks were bare.

"I guess," he muttered, "'t them chogshead don't like baked clams."

He shoved the reel into a pocket, but made no unnecessary motion. In the course of half an hour, during which he had seemed to be no more than an excrescence on the stringpiece, he straightened up, sighed deeply, and began to unfold himself. He shambled up the wharf slowly. He was in no hurry.

"Guess I'll go look 't them bo'ts ag'in," he mut-

tered, "an' see th' owners mebbe. An' I might 's well see what th' neighbors 's brought in, too."

There was no fasting at Madame Wadham's, even if it was Good Friday. There was feasting instead, and it would last for three days at least. When Jean had to go would be time enough for sorrow, if there was to be sorrow. Madame Wadham was as fond of Jean as if she had been her own granddaughter; fonder perhaps. Drusilla aways said so; but she had been ready to acknowledge that Jean needed the affection of somebody, and if she could not get affection from the person from whom she most wanted it, that left the field open for the next. "And you're next, grandmother," she said. "You're elected unanimously." At which her grandmother laughed, gave Drusilla's shoulder a pat, and said nothing. But she had done her whole duty by Jean as she tried to do in everything. Drusilla knew it. She was convinced also that if the time ever came when Jean did not need her grandmother's affection above everything else, and value it accordingly, it would be different. Madame Wadham liked to be first; she was used to it. Although she would not have acknowledged it, it was an essential part of the unspoken contract according to which she dispensed special favor. Mr. Killian was the latest example.

The relations between Mr. Killian himself and his daughter Jean were new and unaccustomed, not yet fixed. It amused Madame Wadham to watch them develop. Their very newness and strangeness made

both Jean and her father "kind o' shy," as Mr. Chick had reported. Knowing how it would be, Madame Wadham had asked nobody in to dinner on that first day, not even the Druces. It was to be "just the family," as she smilingly put it. The Killians understood, and seemed grateful, although they said nothing.

It was so new and hard to establish relations on the new basis that Mr. Killian hardly said a word to Jean. He talked with Madame Wadham readily enough, and intimately. This astonished Jean so much that she did not quite manage to conceal it, although she ought to have known, from letters, that their relations were cordial. She had not realized how cordial, and she felt a curious and unaccountable jealousy. Here she was, instinctively expecting from her father, at any moment, one of his old sharp speeches; and here was her father showing, instead of that, intimacy and liking. There was no mistaking the liking; and it was but yesterday, it seemed to Jean, that his most cutting speeches had been in regard to this woman. What business had he to do it? What right? Jean was rather silent.

Madame Wadham, as was to be expected, noted that. "Jean dear," she said, smiling, "tell us what you do. What are your duties in the office, and how is your time divided?"

"Why, certainly, Madame Wadham," Jean replied soberly, "if you want to know more than has been in my letters."

"I do, for one, my dear. You never get, from letters, intimate little things that you naturally tell — about your work, you know, and your classes. You would have to write a volume a week to tell them. And your father, I'm afraid, knows much less than I."

Mr. Killian, as it happened, knew everything that Jean had written about her work. Madame Wadham had conscientiously withheld nothing of it, and he had remembered it all, which was more than could be said of Madame Wadham. But he said nothing of it, and Jean proceeded to expound, describing her duties in the office, all her courses and her classes, her room and the division of her time.

"But, Jean, dear," Madame Wadham said, "you don't say anything about relaxation and amusement. What do you do in your leisure time?"

Jean laughed. "Leisure!" she said. "I have n't any. I had almost forgotten that there was such a thing. At any rate, it does n't trouble me. There are more lectures and things connected with my college work than I can possibly go to."

"It is n't right, Jean," Madame Wadham protested gently. "I'm afraid you're too conscientious. You ought to have a little fling. I should feel that I owed it to myself."

"Well," Jean acknowledged slowly, "I do have a very little, going to a concert now and then, and to the opera once. As far as that goes, it's all a fling for me, the whole thing."

"I can understand that. It would be for me, but I should want an occasional fling utterly unconnected with my work or with any useful purpose whatever."

Mr. Killian threw his head back and laughed suddenly, but not loud. "I'll bet you would," he said admiringly. "The useful aspect spoils it, does n't it? Freedom of spirit — untrammelled — for you. No shackles, however light."

She smiled at him, almost affectionately. "How completely you understand, John!" she said. "It has always been so. I hope it always will be."

Jean was looking from one to the other. "I can't get used to it," she said with a little laugh. "I can't understand it."

"Never mind," Madame Wadham rejoined comfortingly, "you will, in time. Your father and I have got really fond of each other. Have n't we, John?"

Mr. Killian's cheeks were becoming warm, but he made no other reply. Madame Wadham laughed. "Oh, well," she continued, "you need n't answer, but we are. And now, Jean dear, tell us about your classes. Are there any of your professors or instructors who are specially interesting? You know, that is the really vital question. An instructor who is really good will make any course interesting, while a dull teacher will spoil whatever he touches. And I believe," she pursued, "that, in the long run, an instructor is apt to be more interesting than a professor. It's not such an old story to them."

"There is one instructor," Jean answered, "who makes his course interesting. I may have spoken of him."

"Ah!" Madame Wadham said, trying to make her involuntary exclamation meaningless. "Possibly you have. Do they have many men there? The professors, perhaps, but are there many men instructors?"

"Not many," Jean replied. "Mr. Hunt is the only one I have. He has our chemistry course."

"Chemistry!" cried Madame Wadham. "And he succeeds in making chemistry interesting! Marvellous!"

Jean flushed faintly. "He certainly does," she said. "Chemistry is very different from what it was in —"

"In my time," Madame Wadham interrupted quickly. She laughed gayly. "My dear Jean, I don't doubt you for a minute. But I have n't the least idea what it was like in my time or any other. I don't know anything about the subject. My only ideas of it are the prejudices acquired in the last thirty years — or more. Rather more. It is generally acknowledged to be the dreest subject that can be scared up. Will —"

"Oh, Will!" Jean interrupted in her turn. "If you've got your ideas from him! Perhaps it was not presented in as interesting a way."

"A charitable view. He has lost his chance, I'm afraid. But if you find it interesting, go to it, Jean.

I suppose that is slang, but it is very expressive. Indeed, I find that I'm acquiring a great deal of slang, and so long as I can choose, I like it."

A smile was playing about Jean's mouth. "You know, the only night I went to the opera, I met Mr. Hunt there. I went 'rush,' in the topmost gallery. 'Nigger heaven' they call it sometimes. It must be rather like a horse race. At the given time they open the gates, and all the people gathered there race up three flights of stairs and pop into the best seats they can get. It is rather hard on anybody with a weak heart. Well, when I arrived and had popped into my seat I found that Mr. Hunt had popped into the next seat. He leaned over and said that he had been right beside me all the way up. The crowd is so great that about all you can do is to surge up the stairs as fast as you can. If it had n't been so crowded I suppose he would have passed me, for he is very tall and long-legged, and he goes up stairs three steps at a time."

"Would his heart have stood it?" Madame Wadham asked soberly.

"Oh, his heart is all right," answered Jean. "He grew up in the country."

"Ah," said Madame Wadham.

"That top gallery," Jean resumed, "is n't really a nigger heaven at all. I saw only three or four colored people there, but the place was filled with musicians of all degrees of prosperity. It is rather terrifying — not the musicians, but the steepness. You are

afraid, all the time, that you may slide off on top of the people's heads. I told Mr. Hunt that I wished I had brought a grapnel. That was when he told me that he had been 'raised' on a farm, and would like to get a glimpse of a seafaring population, and grapnels and things."

"Do you think, Jean, that this village would afford him the opportunity he wants?"

Jean flushed, not faintly this time.

"I don't know," she replied. "I did n't think of that at the time. But he has asked me, since, about my — about the place I lived in. I don't know, of course, what he had in mind."

"It was not in class, I suppose," Madame Wadham remarked, "that he asked you."

"No," said Jean simply. "We have taken walks, twice, about the country. The country is very beautiful about there, and he is interested in it. He told me ever so many things — about farming and the country — that I did n't know."

The conversation languished after that. Jean was beginning to be sorry that she had said so much, and Madame Wadham was reminded once more that hopes are but fleeting. She was seeing her pet scheme for Will Druce and Jean vanishing into thin air behind a tall, gangling figure, country-bred. She knew the signs.

She sighed, looked amused, then laughed.

Jean showed her surprise, and Mr. Killian spoke quickly.

"What is it, Madame Wadham? It's a joke, I judge. Won't you tell us?"

"You're right, John. That's my opinion too. It's a joke on me. But I can't tell you yet. I shall find out in time, and I will tell you then. Between the cup and the lip, you know — well, shall we go into the other room?"

As Jean and her father were leaving, an hour later, they became aware of a tall, loose figure emerging from the darkness at the corner of the house.

Jean started. "You here!" she cried. "How in the world did you get — Oh, it's Tumbleberry," she said. Her tone showed disappointment, although it was somewhat difficult to see why. "How do you do, Tumbleberry."

"Hello, Jean," Mr. Tumbleberry roared. "Y' 're back from college f'r a little visit, ain't you? I heard 't y' was. Chick tol' me."

Mr. Tumbleberry was vainly trying to shove a large package, wrapped in newspaper, into his overcoat pocket as he spoke. The pocket was capacious enough, for it had held three lobsters at one time, and many other things at other times, but the newspaper wrapping had an exasperating habit of catching on the edges.

"'T don't seem t' want t' go," he said apologetically. "Ne' min'. I ain't nowise p'ticular. I c'n carry 't in m' hand. 'T 's only a bundle 't 'Rissa wanted I sh'd take along 's long 's I was a-goin'."

"Oh," said Jean, smiling, "have you been in to see Clarissa?"

"Well, yes," Mr. Tumbleberry boomed, "I'll have t' acknowledge th' corn. But I ain't been a-settin' up with 'er. Chick does that, an' it's past 'is time. I jest went in t' see how Baxter was a-gittin' along."

"That was kind," said Jean. "How is Baxter?"

"Sh' don't git no better, 'Rissa says. Sh' thought I better not go in, so I talked with 'er outside. Baxter has some pain. Sh' don't seem t' enjoy good health."

"I have no doubt that you would find that she would enjoy it," Mr. Killian remarked dryly, "if she had it."

Mr. Tumbleberry did not deign a reply to this. "I got t' be a-goin' along. Glad t' see y', Jean."

His fingers were itching to open the package. In spite of the moon, he could not wait to turn the corner, and began to munch upon a sandwich.

"Can't see none too well," he muttered, bending close, "but they 's three of 'em, an' some'n' else underneath."

He was aware of quick footsteps turning the corner, and tried to conceal the package. Too late. Mr. Chick stopped in astonishment within three feet of him.

"Hello, Tum!" he exclaimed. "What in tarnation y' a-doin' here?" His eyes had fallen upon the package, its newspaper wrapper floating upon the

gentle night breeze. "Huh!" he said. "Thought y' was turned Catholic."

"So I was, Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry boomed heartily. "So I was. An' I was a perf'ctly good one. Y' call t' mind 't was from sunup to sundown 't we could n't eat nothin', an' I ain't. Could 'a' got me a special dis — dis'pation — 'r whatever th' call it — but I did n't. I stuck 'er out till sundown an' a leetle more."

"Uh-huh," said Mr. Chick noncommittally. "Did y' see Baxter?"

"No," replied Mr. Tumbleberry in his breeziest manner. "No, I did n't make out t' see Baxter, but y' 'll find 'em all there. Y' 're late, Chick, an' it 'd be jest 's well f'r you t' be thinkin' up some good reason f'r it, 'f they is any."

Mr. Chick had already started, walking rapidly. Mr. Tumbleberry watched his dim figure until it vanished under the elms. "It's curi's," he muttered in a detached way. "It's curi's to see 'em when they 's taken that way." He shambled on slowly, munching his sandwiches.

CHAPTER XVIII

Poor old Baxter had succumbed to age and disability, and to a little patch of ice on the doorstone. Madame Wadham did everything possible for her in death as she had done in life, and she had a funeral for her from her own house. It was rather an imposing funeral, with flowers, a choir of a sort to sing the hymns, and a clergyman — Episcopal, of course, for Baxter had been of the Established Church — who read the service solemnly and impressively, and delivered a dignified eulogy upon Baxter and faithful service. Baxter had had few friends, but many acquaintances, all of whom had held her in high esteem, and nearly all of whom were present, from Madame Wadham herself and Cynthia Druce to Clarissa and Mr. Chick. Mr. Tumbleberry was not present. It is to be supposed that he was unavoidably detained.

Mr. Tumbleberry, at the time, was engaged upon a catboat drawn upon the shore in a rough cradle. The canvas which had protected her all winter had been stripped off, and a beginning had been made at other matters preparatory to painting, although it was difficult, on casual inspection, to say just what. At any rate, Mr. Tumbleberry seemed to be busy. A pot of paint stood upon the ground beside him, and a brush across its top. It was not much of a

brush, and if a seat at the Follies had been purchased for it, the ticket seller would have assigned it unhesitatingly to the middle of row "A." In Mr. Tumbleberry's right hand was what he intended to use as a scraper, a piece of bright new tin; and on the ground was a little pile of other pieces of bright new tin, cuttings from the tinsmith's, of all shapes, but all small. In his left hand was a rag. The rag was not bright and new, and the less said about it the better.

Mr. Tumbleberry appeared to be introspective. He muttered frequently, and from time to time he stood back from his work, threw out both of his long arms, and declaimed in a solemn, deep and hollow voice. Having thus satisfied himself for the moment, he would advance with the tin, make a few passes which dislodged an infinitesimal amount of old paint and converted it into dust, make another pass with the rag, and retire to declaim once more.

Presently another figure hove in sight. This second figure was short and broad. Mr. Tumbleberry was not aware of it, as it came up behind him in one of his fits of declamation, over the tufts of withered grass with which the shore at this point was covered. Mr. Chick stopped and gazed at his friend's back.

"Say, Tum," he interrupted, "ain't y' feelin' well, 'r what's th' matter with you? D' y' feel 's if y' 'd ought t' go t' th' horspit'l?"

Mr. Tumbleberry gave a hollow cough. "So

there y' be, Chick," he rumbled. "Y' had n't ought t' come breakin' int' my remarks an' interruptin' trains o' thought. I might 'a' got me up an interestin' speech, I should n't wonder a mite. Jest take one o' these 'ere scrapers an' scrape 'er paint off 'er bottom. You c'n git at it easier 'n what I can."

Mr. Chick shook his head. "I ain't a-goin' t' scrape no bo'ts," he said. "I ain't got time."

"Might 's well scrape a little 's t' be stan'in' there doin' nothin'," said Mr. Tumbleberry persuasively. "'T won't take no time wuth mentionin', an' I want t' hear about th' occasion. Besides, an' in addition thereto, when I go t' git down s' low, a pain sort o' takes me in th' stummick so 's I can't do nothin'."

"'S it a shootin' pain, Tum?" asked Mr. Chick with a fleeting interest. He had picked up a piece of tin, and was absent-mindedly scraping the paint within reach. "Does it feel 's if 't was in y'r 'pendix?"

Mr. Tumbleberry stopped all show of work and eyed Mr. Chick sharply.

"Not 's I know on," he replied slowly. "Jest where is y'r 'pendix, Chick?"

"Dunno," said Mr. Chick promptly. He was rather careless about it, and did n't seem to care greatly where that important organ was. "Down 'round y'r stummick some'eres."

"Well," boomed Mr. Tumbleberry, straightening with importance, "mebbe 't is. I should n't wonder a mite 'f 't is. 'T sort o' feels 's if 't was. It ketches

me there 'f I go t' stoop an' scrunch m' down. Jest give a few scrapes 'long that ga'board streak. Y' got th' scraper in y'r han', an' y' might 's well."

"But I ain't got time," Mr. Chick complained querulously. "An' I'd have t' git clear down 'n m' back on th' ground. 'T's th' only way y' c'n git at it. An' they ain't room f'r me, but they'd be room f'r you. You c'n jest git down here y'rself, Tum."

Mr. Tumbleberry gave a hollow cough. "'F I was t' git down there, I should n't never be able t' git up again. Go ahead, Chick. Scrunch down a little mite. Y' know, 's fur 's that goes, it's a reg'lar reducin' exercise 't all these 'ere doctors recommends. Takes th' fat off y'r waist line best 'f any of 'em. I ain't got any fat t' lose, but you can't tell where y'r waist line is, I think likely."

With much grumbling and complaining, Mr. Chick was engaged in wedging himself in between the bottom of the boat and the ground. After a series of rumblings and explosions there was quiet down there.

"Y' all comf'table there, Chick?" asked Mr. Tumbleberry cheerfully. "If y' are —"

"Comf'table!" shouted Mr. Chick. He shook the boat. "Jumpin' Jiminy! Comf'table! With a boat restin' on m' stummick!"

There followed silence, but a series of heaves which made it seem as if the boat were at sea.

"I think, Chick," boomed Mr. Tumbleberry warningly, "'t y'd jest 's well not t' rock th' bo't.

Sh' might go clear over, an' then where 'd you be? Th' force o' gravity applies to 'em, y' know, Chick. I ain't been able t' git me up no way 't it don't."

"But, Tum," Mr. Chick complained, rather short of breath, "I can't git out noways."

"Well, ne' min', Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry said soothingly, "y' will somehow 'r 'nother. I can't call t' mind ary a man 't 's ever starved t' death underneath 'f a bo't. 'S long 's y' 're there, y' might give a few scrapes 'long them streaks each side o' th' keel. Don't want t' lose th' chancet. Then y' c'n kind o' sort o' work y'rself loose, 'r we c'n dig y' out. They's somebody 't I c'n find t' help m' out at it, I should n't wonder a mite. Don't y' worry, Chick, but scrape a little mite."

A deep sigh proceeded from under the boat, then the sound of the scraper, and a tremendous spluttering.

"Jumpin' Jiminy!" said Mr. Chick. "'T 's all fine dust, an' 't all went in m' mouth! An' all paint too."

"Ain't they no weeds on 'er?" Mr. Tumbleberry asked. "I sh'd 'a' made sure 't they was weeds on 'er. An' I'd 'a' said weeds would 'a' tasted more like a clam-bake."

"Don't taste like no clam-bake neither!" exploded Mr. Chick. "'F y' want t' taste las' year's clam-bake, y' c'n git down here."

"I can't, Chick," said Mr. Tumbleberry patiently.

"I would, cheerful, but I can't. Jest give a few more scrapes."

"It all goes int' m' mouth an' eyes I tell y', Tum," said the exasperated Mr. Chick, "an' I ain't a-goin' t' do it."

"Jest shet y'r mouth an' eyes, Chick," replied Mr. Tumbleberry calmly, "an' 't won't trouble y' none — 'r none wuth mentionin'." He broke off into a fit of coughing which lasted a long time and left him weak.

"'S th' matter with y', Tum?" asked Mr. Chick somewhat anxiously. "Y' got th' consumption, 'r what is it?"

Mr. Tumbleberry gave what passed for a jovial laugh. "No, Chick," he boomed, "I ain't. 'S only a leetle mite o' cold 'n m' chist 't I got one o' these 'ere nice bright spring days. 'T ain't nothin'. Have y' lost th' scraper? I ain't heard nothin' of it."

Mr. Chick grunted, there was the sound of the scraper being passed back and forth rapidly — and with too much energy.

"Gosh darn th' gol blasted ol' piece o' tin!" muttered Mr. Chick, and threw it from him as far as he could manage in his cramped position. "Why 'n't y' git a real scraper while y' 're about it? Then 't might have some good into it." He relapsed into expletives. "M' mouth an' m' hair an' m' eyes an' m' clo'es!"

"Ne' min', Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry said cheerfully. "Mebbe I c'n make out to kick some more

scrapers so 's y' c'n reach 'em." He kicked, and providentially Mr. Chick's groping hand managed to reach a couple of scraps of tin. "Now, Chick, 'f y' 're all settled comf'table, y' might tell m' 'bout th' 'casion this mornin'. Was they all th' folks there 't was 'xpected?" Mr. Tumbleberry now and then scraped, in order that he might seem to be attending to his duty. "They was Wadham, an' Killian, I s'pose, an' 'Rissa. Was 'Rissa there?"

A grunt from Mr. Chick.

"'D she set next t' you?"

Another grunt from Mr. Chick.

"'D y' hol' han's?"

A squeak of exasperation from Mr. Chick. "We did n't hol' han's neither. 'Course we did n't, an' y' know it."

"Why did n't y', Chick? Y' had n't ought t' fly 'n th' face o' Providence. 'Don't often git sech a chancet. Th' room kind o' dark, too. Now, don't y' go an' git mad, Chick. I'll bet th' red's a-gittin' int' y'r face this minute, an' th' bo't 's on y'r stummick, so 's y' can't git up. How much chancet have y' got? Not ary a chancet. Have y' give 'er that photographt yet?"

A growl from Mr. Chick.

"Y' have n't forgot th' photographt I mean?" asked Mr. Tumbleberry in surprise. "I sh'd think y' 'd call t' mind th' matereemonial agency 't I started up. Y' had n't ought t' forgit that, Chick. Don't y' call t' min' 't I tol' y' 't you an' 'Rissa 'd

have t' have th' photographt took th' wide way o' th' card, so 's they c'd git y' all on? Well, I thought y' call it t' min', sure."

There was a violent explosion from Mr. Chick, and the scraper came flying out, striking upon Mr. Tumbleberry's leg.

"Y' had n't ought t' git mad," Mr. Tumbleberry protested, "an' I tryin' m' level best t' 'blige y' both. 'T's a ginuine agency, Chick, 'th fees reg'lar an' everything. 'F y' c'd see y'r way t' availin' y'rself of th' opportunities —"

There had been a tremendous commotion down below, and Mr. Chick's legs slowly emerged, followed by his round body, somewhat the worse for wear, and by his red face, much disfigured by grime and paint dust. He did not bestow a single look on Mr. Tumbleberry, but dusted his clothes and walked off with as much dignity as he could manage. Mr. Chick was capable of a surprising degree of offended dignity, although he was not thinking of that.

"Hol' on there, Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry called after him. "Don't y' go an' git mad. 'T ain't safe f'r you, built 's you be. I made out t' git me some paint, an' I' got it here. Can't git paint every day, an' it right in a can, too, with a bresh t' boot. I 's kind o' figgerin' 't y' 'd spread a leetle mite on them bottom streaks, 'long 's y' was settled down there comf'table. Come back here, won't y', Chick."

But Mr. Chick did not turn, nor did he make any

reply. He marched off straight to the road, and up the hill toward Mrs. Keep's.

"Sho!" said Mr. Tumbleberry, turning once more to the boat. "He gits mad awful' easy. An' me with all this good paint! It'll skin over, I think likely, 'fore I c'n git t' use it. Well, p'raps he'll come 'round ag'in. Anyways, I guess I won't put it on. It'd be a pity t' spile Chick's chancet t' spread it while 't 's fresh. Fresh paint spreads smoother."

Mr. Chick did not come around. He was angry and hurt, more on Clarissa's account than on his own, and he could not get over it. The feeling lasted, in a modified degree, until his regular visit to Clarissa that evening.

Clarissa was rather sober and silent. She was missing Baxter, who had required attention, even in death; and who, in life, had been so cheerful and so grateful for each little service, in spite of suffering of which she never spoke. It was some time, therefore, before Mr. Chick's lack of spirits and moroseness forced itself upon her attention.

"What's the matter, Chick?" she asked with a warmth for him at her heart. "Are you missing mother Baxter too? It seems terribly empty without her, does n't it?"

Mr. Chick shuffled his feet. He was embarrassed. If he had not been sitting he would have begun to teeter back and forth.

"Yes," he said, "'t does. 'Course I miss her. She was all right. 'Course I never see s' very much of

'er, an' I never had t' do for 'er th' way you've had t' do sence sh' 's sick, s' 't can't hardly be 'xpected 't I'd miss 'er s' much 's what you do. But I miss 'er all right." Mr. Chick had a fundamental regard for truth and justice, and hated to leave a false impression. "But 't ain't that s' much. It's Tum."

Clarissa bristled instantly. "That good-for-nothing! What's he been doing now — imposing on you again? You're altogether too good-natured, Chick. You ought to get your back up once."

"I do, 'Rissa," replied Mr. Chick earnestly, "more 'n once. But 't don't do no good. 'T don't make no difference t' Tum. 'T seems t' make 'im rub 't in harder. But he ain't none too well, an' 't makes 'im sour-like. I don' hol' that ag'in' 'im. It's — it's pokin' fun at — at you an' me." Mr. Chick hesitated, and got red as fire. He was unable to continue.

Clarissa laughed out. "So that's it!" she exclaimed. "I should n't think you'd care. I don't. If people get pleasure out of that sort of thing, why, let them. It does n't hurt us — unless you'd rather not be coupled with me?"

A great light began to dawn on Mr. Chick's face. "'Course I would n't. I mean 't I'd rather be. I mean 't I ain't no objection — I can't say it right, 'Rissa, but I'd like it all right t' be coupled 'th you." He beamed. "I do kind o' like it, s' long 's y' ain't no objection."

Clarissa laughed again. "No, Chick, I've no ob-

jection," she said. "But I should n't be laughing so loud, and poor mother Baxter just in her grave." She sobered. "Still, she would n't care. It was n't like her to object to laughter. Tell me what Tum says about us."

"You come an' set 'longside o' me, 'Rissa," said Mr. Chick persuasively, "an' I will."

Clarissa needed no persuasion. She came, willingly enough, and Mr. Chick recounted the story of Mr. Tumbleberry's matrimonial agency, finishing with his experience under the keel of the boat, doing Tum's scraping for him. At the end Clarissa was shrieking with laughter, while Mr. Chick was faintly smiling.

"Oh, Chick," said Clarissa, as soon as she could speak, "the funniest thing about it is that you don't see the fun of it. But never mind. Why not do it?"

Mr. Chick looked blank. "Huh?" he asked.

"Have our photographs taken as Tum wants us to. Just as if his matrimonial agency was real."

Mr. Chick looked at her in blank amazement. "An' go through 'th it an' all?" he gasped.

"If you want to," said Clarissa. "I'd just as lief. I'm sure Tum does n't have enough to eat."

Mr. Chick smiled blissfully and his arm shot across Clarissa's waist. It would go no farther, for Mr. Chick's arms were short and Clarissa's waist was wide. "I'd jest as leevs," he said. "I'd rather. Oh, 'Rissa!"

At that moment the door to the dining-room opened, and Madame Wadham stood before them.

"I'D JEST AS LEEVS," HE SAID. "I'D RATHER. OH, 'RISSA!"

"I heard the laughter," she began, "and — why, Clarissa!"

Mr. Chick had attempted to withdraw his arm, but Clarissa stopped him. "Chick and I are engaged to be married, Madame Wadham," she announced.

This rather took Madame Wadham's breath away, but she recovered at once.

"I'm sure I congratulate you both," she said, "and you especially, Chick. You'll have a treasure."

Mr. Chick and Clarissa were both on their feet, Mr. Chick red and smiling and embarrassed. He mumbled something, and Clarissa laughed.

"Chick's awkward," she said. "But he'll get over some of it."

Madame Wadham was beginning to see the vista ahead of her.

"I suppose you have hardly made any plans yet, Clarissa," she began.

"Well, no, 'm, hardly yet."

"I hope you won't find," she said, "that it will be necessary to leave me."

"Thank you, Madame Wadham, I don't believe it will — not for quite a while yet, anyway. Unless you want me to."

"Heaven forbid! Better consult me about plans, Clarissa. I may be able to offer a plan that will be agreeable to all of us. Will Chick want to stay late?"

"Not later," answered Clarissa, smiling, "than his regular time. Why should he?"

"That will be agreeable to me," said Madame Wadham with satisfaction. "You *are* a treasure, Clarissa."

When she had gone Clarissa and Mr. Chick settled themselves in their seats again. Mr. Chick had been thinking.

"You ain't sore at Tum, 'Rissa?" he asked somewhat anxiously.

Clarissa laughed. "Oh, no. I'm grateful to him. I can't like him, but he ought to be a ringmaster."

Mr. Chick pondered this remark, but could make nothing of it.

CHAPTER XIX

MADAME WADHAM looked up from the letter she was reading, a look of whimsical amusement on her face.

"Well, John," she said, "it looks as if the joke was on me — and on you too, I'm afraid. Here's Jean announcing —"

"What!" he cried. He looked ferocious, a deep frown between his eyes, the eyes themselves emitting a baleful glare. In his unaccountable excitement he had rumpled his hair.

"Mercy!" said Madame Wadham, laughing easily. "Don't eat me up. She is n't announcing her engagement."

"Oh," he responded, relaxing at once. "You scared me. I thought she might be. You never can tell what they will do. That confounded instructor — Hunt, or whatever his name is —"

"That confounded instructor," she interrupted, "Hunt, or whatever his name is, is just the matter. And I should advise you to prepare yourself to receive any announcement with equanimity. Not that I have any private information on the subject of Hunt, but just on general principles. That is part of the joke, which I don't expect you to understand."

"Don't you think," he asked meekly, "that I am sufficiently prepared for the operation?"

She laughed again. "Not quite," she answered.

"It might be dangerous. You know," she went on, "this is the merry month of June —"

"Should think it was March," he growled. "But go on."

"Don't you know yet," she asked, "that summer does n't begin until the twentieth, and until that date it is winter? There is n't any Spring, merely the tradition left from our English ancestry. To-day is only the day Jean's college releases her."

He bowed. "That fact seems to stand out," he replied, "from the wreck and general devastation, with a certain amount of clearness."

"And," she continued, "the aforesaid college also releases, temporarily, on the same day, certain of its instructors."

"Ah," he said, "I begin to see where the blow is impending."

"I thought you might," she observed, "being a man of perspicacity. You may recall certain facts about Mr. Hunt, revealed by Jean."

"Went to the Opera; very tall and thin. Looks like Tumbleberry, I judge."

"Oh, I hope not," said Madame Wadham quickly. "What makes you think that?"

"Jean saw Tumbleberry, as we went home one night. Thought he was Hunt."

"Dear me! We must look into that. We are likely to have the chance. Do you remember that he was brought up in the country —"

"Oh, yes. Takes walks, and knows a lot that

Jean does n't know — strange as it may seem. Telling her as fast as he can, I judge." He sighed and shook his head. "Let the blow fall."

"It is about to," said Madame Wadham. "Do you remember, too, that he wished to get some village — some maritime atmosphere, so to speak?"

"Rather sudden," he observed, "and a little bald — speaking of marry time atmosphere so unblushingly. But the blow has fallen. When is he coming?"

"To-morrow," said Madame Wadham, a little hysterical. "To-morrow. And Jean has kindly left it to me to find him a place to live. There is no such place in the village except Mrs. Keep's, and no room there. I'm afraid, John, that you'll have to take him in."

"I'll be everlastingly jiggered," said Mr. Killian, with some heat, "or words to that effect, if I take him in."

"I would n't speak quite so positively," Madame Wadham suggested. "Jean is very apt to get what she wants."

"So are you," he retorted. "So are you. Perhaps I was hasty. But I don't feel like retracting — yet. Can't you telegraph that it is impossible to find accommodations for him?"

"We can," she said, "of course, if you insist. But I would n't do it, John. Better for both you and Jean if you make a virtue of the inevitable. It will please —"

"Everybody but me," he interrupted. "That, of

course, is not of the least consequence. Well," — he sighed — "we'll do the easiest thing, which is nothing at all, and see what turns up."

By the middle of the next forenoon nothing had turned up except Jean and Mr. Hunt, accompanied by their bags. At the same instant Clarissa arrived from Madame Wadham's, and announced that she had come to clear up a little.

"Why," asked Jean, rather startled, "does it need it so badly? How long since it was —"

"Months," the smiling Clarissa interrupted.

"Mercy!" murmured Jean.

"Yes," said Clarissa. "As soon as you get around to it I'd be glad if you'd tell me what rooms you want done first. Meanwhile I'll begin."

She entered, meeting Mr. Killian just inside the door, and smiling at him. His hair was on end and he looked worried.

"Psst! Clarissa!" he said in a hoarse whisper. "Is Madame Wadham coming?"

"No, sir," she replied. "I think not."

"Why not?" he asked, exasperated. "This is her funeral, it seems to me."

Clarissa laughed. "I don't know, sir," she said. "She did n't say."

Jean was just behind her. She had got tired of the delay, and remarking that they might as well go in, she had pushed on. She had been in time to catch that last speech of her father's, and she took offence at once.

"Father," she announced with dignity, "this is Mr. Hunt."

Mr. Killian mumbled something about being glad to see him, which he obviously was not. Mr. Hunt bowed and looked faintly amused, but said nothing at all. Mr. Killian was looking him over. He saw a young man with a great frame, on which there was no spare flesh, but apparently plenty of muscle; a young man well over six feet tall, who was lean rather than thin, wearing horn spectacles behind which shone sharp eyes, at the moment filled with a growing amusement.

"Superficial," he murmured. "I see it now, but superficial — superficial."

"What!" cried Jean indignantly. "Well, father, I do think you might be a little more gracious!"

The young man had passed the bounds of amusement, and he laughed out.

"Gracious, Jean?" asked Mr. Killian in surprise. "There was no ungraciousness intended in my remark. I referred to the resemblance to Tumbleberry."

"Resemblance to Tumbleberry!" Jean cried, more indignant than ever. "Well! Resemblance!" She was almost past speech. Then she remembered. "Oh!" she said faintly, and she flushed.

"No doubt there is a resemblance," her father went on, "although it is faint — in the dark. I don't wonder that you —"

"Madame Wadham," said Jean hastily, flushing

a bright red, "was to find some place for Mr. Hunt. Do you know whether she has, or where it is?"

"I don't know," he answered. He might as well take the plunge, after all, now as well as another time. Evidently he would have to, in the end. It might as well be at this end. "She seemed to think that it might be difficult, and if Mr. Hunt can get along with the accommodations that we can offer, why — I should be glad to have him stay with us."

Mr. Hunt bowed, and looked at Jean. How would she take it?

There was no doubt how she would take it. She beamed instantly.

"Thank you, father. I'm sure he can get along." She looked up at Mr. Hunt. "Can you? I hope you won't mind."

Whereat he protested that he did not mind in the least, but it was just the arrangement that pleased him best. These words were the first that Hunt had spoken. Mr. Killian found his voice agreeable, deep and musical; a pleasant voice to listen to; an excellent voice for an instructor, he thought, especially an instructor for young women. As he thought these thoughts, Mr. Killian smiled rather in his old, outgrown manner. If anything came of it all he would have to bear his share of responsibility, and he did not like that. He was not ready to be responsible in any degree.

Jean had gone to see about a room for Mr. Hunt, and Mr. Killian found himself once more listening to

that agreeable, musical voice. In a few minutes he found himself asking Mr. Hunt to come into his study. He was annoyed at that, for it was distinctly what he had not meant to do. He apologized for the appearance of his study, for there was no doubt that it was a mess; how much of a mess it was, he had not realized until that moment. But Hunt laughed, and begged him not to apologize for a study. His own was much worse.

Mr. Hunt did most of the talking, and Mr. Killian the heavy listening; purposefully, at first, but later he forgot that he had a purpose, and listened because he wanted to hear what the other had to say. For Hunt talked easily and pleasantly, and he seemed to have the gift of hitting upon topics of conversation which were of interest. Naturally enough, he talked about Jean, to begin with, and found her a subject not without interest to both of them. It developed that he was instructor in chemistry — a fact of which Mr. Killian had been informed, but had promptly forgotten — because it was an instructor in chemistry they wanted. He would prefer to teach physics, in which subject he was rather better qualified.

Mr. Killian pricked up his ears at this. He leaned forward. "Do you know anything," he asked, "about this new theory of relativity?"

"Why, yes," Mr. Hunt answered slowly, "I think so — something."

"Will you explain it to me?" Mr. Killian said. "I

have been trying to get hold of it from several articles I have — magazine articles — but I can't make anything but bosh out of it. If you can make the whole thing clear I shall be very much obliged."

Mr. Hunt laughed. "That is rather a large order," he replied, "but I will try. I don't know that it is all clear to me. You know there was said to be only one man who really understood the whole thing. He died. I don't know whether it was in consequence. Unfortunate, is n't it?"

Mr. Killian laughed with him, and Jean poked her head in at the door.

"Oh, here you are!" she said. "I could n't find you anywhere. It never occurred to me to look in here, until I heard you laughing. What were you laughing at? Was it a joke?"

"More or less," Hunt admitted. "Your father was asking me to make clear the theory of relativity. The joke was that I said I'd try."

"I've seen it mentioned," said Jean unsmilingly, "but I don't know anything about it. It's likely to take quite a long time, is n't it? Don't you want to go up to your room now? Then we can go out and stroll about the village."

"And begin to get some maritime atmosphere," Mr. Killian threw in.

Mr. Hunt was amused — undoubtedly amused. There came from him what sounded suspiciously like a chuckle, although it was difficult to tell what he was chuckling at. He was an intelligent man,

and he knew, of course, that Jean's question did not require an answer, and was in the nature of an order. Probably he did not object to an order from Jean. That is as it may be.

"I will follow your suggestion," he said to Mr. Killian, "and begin to absorb. If you don't mind postponing our little explanation, we'll resume later."

Mr. Killian was thoughtful when those two had left. He stood at the window, his hands in his pockets, and he was not thinking about relativity. Confound it! He liked the fellow — as far as they had got; but they had not got far. There would be plenty of time to change his mind. He saw Mr. Chick waddle happily up the street and into the Wadham yard. There was a bone to pick with Madame Wadham. What did she mean by leaving him alone in his hour of trial? It was a desertion that was unworthy of her. When he got a chance — *if* he got a chance — he must ask her about it. Standing there, he saw Mr. Chick waddle hurriedly out with a lawn-mower, leave the lawn-mower reposing on the Wadham lawn, and hurry across the road. He was bound for the Killian house, evidently. Ah, yes! Mr. Chick's very substantial magnet was, at that moment, upstairs. And Jean was somewhere about. As if in answer to his thoughts, the front door opened and shut. He saw Mr. Chick suddenly stop as if struck by lightning, his mouth drop open, and an expression of wonder

come upon his face. Then Jean and Mr. Hunt descended the steps.

Mr. Killian grinned maliciously as he left the window. "That superficial resemblance again!" he murmured. "Chick saw it."

Meanwhile Jean had nodded pleasantly to Mr. Chick. "How d' you do, Chick," she said.

Mr. Chick's expression of shocked astonishment had vanished, and his round, red face was wreathed in smiles. "Hello, Jean," he replied. "Y' 're lookin' fine. 'S y'r college let out?"

"Yes," she said, "and I think we're all glad. I'm glad to be back, I know, and I've brought one of my teachers to see our village."

Mr. Chick turned to Hunt with interest. "One o' Jean's teachers! I want t' know! 'F y' want I sh'd show y' any 'f th' village, I sh'd be glad to. P'ints 'f int'rest, an' all that."

"Thank you," said the smiling Mr. Hunt. "Perhaps I shall ask you to. I'm especially interested in the shore and the water. I have seen little of that kind of thing."

"Sho! Sech 's sailin', coastin' along th' shore, an' th' lobster stage," was Mr. Chick's comment. "Say! Y' 'd ought t' see Tum. He's stronger 'n them things 'n what I be. He'll ast y' t' go sailin' 'th him, like 's not, but I sh'd be kind o' cautious 'bout goin' 'n his ol' direlic' 'f I 's you. Picked 't off some dump."

Mr. Hunt laughed. "Perhaps we can remedy that. You see I'm a farmer. I grew up on a farm,

and I want to get a little experience of the water."

"Experience!" exclaimed Mr. Chick. "Y' 'll git 'xperience 'f y' go sailin' 'th Tum. Me, I've got all th' 'xperience I hanker after o' that kind." He shook his head, then was struck with a sudden idea. "Say, mebbe y' 'd be willin' t' give me some notions about farmin'?"

Mr. Hunt having expressed his willingness to oblige, ideas followed one another in rapid succession in Mr. Chick's brain.

"An' say," he continued, "you bein' a teacher in a college, an' all, mebbe y' know about th' force o' gravity."

Mr. Hunt signified that he knew a little about the force of gravity, and that what he knew was at Mr. Chick's disposal.

Mr. Chick's face glowed with pleasure. "Will y', now? An' will y' make 't clear so 's I c'n understand it, 'bout how it 'plies t' bo'ts? I've al'ays wanted t' know 'bout that, an' I ain't never been able. When 't comes 't y' have time, I wish 't y' 'd do it."

Assuring Mr. Chick that that time would surely come, Jean and Mr. Hunt wrenched themselves away. They left Mr. Chick gazing after them, his face shining with happiness.

"My work seems to be cut out for me," Hunt remarked thoughtfully. "It may take me more than two weeks."

Jean glanced quickly up at him, and laughed a little. "Of course you don't have to," she said.

"The theory of relativity," he continued, "and a complete exposition of gravitation. Closely related. Nobody knows anything about either. And people who are so anxious to know! It calls for my best efforts — but two weeks!" He shook his head. "I can't promise that."

Jean laughed again, but she said nothing, and they walked on in a contented silence. By the water they wandered slowly, Hunt's roving eyes searching the wharf, the surface of the harbor, the farther shore; then returning to the near shore to follow it down toward the breakwater, and out to sea.

Suddenly his eye kindled. "Ha!" he said. "What is that figure looming on the horizon, and blotting out the heavens like a flagpole? Can that be the friend of your round, red friend — the man whom I resemble superficially — Tumbleberry, is the name? So I look like that! Well," he went on, sighing, "I confess that I am disappointed."

"Oh," said Jean hastily, "there is n't the least resemblance, really. Only Tumbleberry is tall — taller than you, I think — and he is thin, while you are simply not stout. But you are n't thin. There is n't the least resemblance. Really there is n't."

"Thank you for the attempt to comfort me." Mr. Hunt seemed to be low in his mind. "I am disappointed. I should like to meet the gentleman."

"You shall have that pleasure," Jean assured him with amusement. She was not difficult to amuse

now. "Shall we chase him now? It would be easy to catch him."

Mr. Tumbleberry was wandering the shore, searching for whatever was to be found; and coughing, but Jean did not know that.

"If you don't mind, I'd like to find a second-hand boat — a dory, do you call it? I have a fancy that I can use one. The little round, red man warned me against Tum's direlic', I remember. I should like to be provided."

"I guess we can find one. To rent?" Jean asked.

"Why," Hunt replied slowly, "I guess it would n't break me to buy one."

"For two weeks? You don't need to buy one to use two weeks."

"Two weeks, more or less. I'd like to own one."

"Oh," said Jean, smiling. What was she smiling at, I wonder. There is nothing funny about buying a dory of a native of a maritime village. "Can you drive a good bargain? We must be sure that we find a dory."

"I will leave that to you. I don't know the animal when I see it. As to driving a bargain," Hunt continued, "I don't know how good I am. We farmers have had to drive some hard bargains — in our day. We were n't rich. If you succeed in leading me to the boat, I will do the best I can."

So Jean, very efficiently, led him to the dory, and he promptly bought it. Jean was disappointed.

"You could have done better," she said when they

were out of hearing of the seller. "Cormick was expecting you to beat him down."

"Well," he agreed, "perhaps he was, and I might have been able to. But, to tell the truth, I thought that was little enough for the boat, and I wanted to hold him to his guaranties. I shall insist upon all of them, you may be sure. Now I am prepared to meet your friend Tumbleberry. Do you think we could find him?"

Jean was ready — for anything. So they set out down the shore, and in the course of time they found Mr. Tumbleberry. They were in no hurry. They almost forgot lunch and Madame Wadham.

CHAPTER XX

"WHAT I want t' know is," said Mr. Chick earnestly, "why bo'ts do th' way they do. 'Course, I know 'bout th' force o' gravity makin' things heavier, but what I don't see clear is why, if things is all heavy together, th' don't all sink together. 'T ain't 's clear t' me 's it might be. I can't seem t' work it out right. 'Course I know th' won't an' th' don't, but I don't see th' real reason why all them things don't go t' th' bottom together."

"In one vast ruin," Mr. Hunt murmured, gazing soberly at Mr. Chick, "or words to that effect. That 's about it, I take it."

"Huh?" asked the puzzled Mr. Chick. Clarissa, leaning against the jamb of the kitchen door, laughed suddenly and joyously.

Mr. Chick, as may be inferred, had attacked Mr. Hunt, and the attack was about to be successful. Mr. Hunt, seeing his Waterloo imminent, had seated himself upon the wheelbarrow, and Mr. Chick had suspended, for the moment, his work upon Madame Wadham's garden. Clarissa had come out to see what was up. It was all natural enough, but then, Clarissa liked to listen to Mr. Hunt's talk. She found it fascinating. Besides, it was a beautiful June day.

"Oh, yeah," said Mr. Chick, stimulated by Cla-

rissa's laugh. "I figger 't would be some'n' like that. Ruin, that's what 't would be, all them bo'ts goin' t' th' bottom t' oncet."

"It would be a sad catastrophe," Mr. Hunt resumed. "Ruin is no fitting word for it; but it won't happen, Chick. There's no danger."

"But *why* don't it happen?" Mr. Chick broke in quickly. "'F y' c'n tell m' that so 's it'll be clear t' me, I'll be 'bliged."

Mr. Hunt sighed. "I'll try." He was silent, deliberating upon his method of presenting the problem to a man of Mr. Chick's earnestness and mental capacity. At last he looked up. "You say that you know that the force of gravity — we'll call it that, for I don't know but that name is as good as another — the force of gravity makes everything heavy. We don't need to know *how* it does."

"Yeah," replied Mr. Chick, nodding.

"And that it makes some things heavier than others," Mr. Hunt continued.

"Yeah," replied Mr. Chick again. "'Course."

"Well, then," Mr. Hunt was going on, "let us suppose we had a big scale — a balance — and that we —"

"Consarn it!" Mr. Chick ejaculated, turning suddenly. He had heard a step on the gravel of the walk; three steps, to be exact. "Here's Mis' Wadham."

"Oh, is it? Well, we'll go on in a few minutes, Chick. I don't believe she'll mind."

Around the corner of the house appeared Madame Wadham, Jean and Mr. Killian.

"What won't she mind?" asked Madame Wadham. "What are you people cooking up here?"

"I was just about to deliver a lecture," Mr. Hunt returned, "on 'Why Boats Float; or Ruin Averted.' I am finding it somewhat difficult. It is not as easy as it seems. I don't want to give Chick more than he can digest."

"They ain't nothin' th' matter 'th m' digestion," murmured Mr. Chick. "It's al'ays been tol'able good."

"Yes," was Hunt's brief comment, "I should rather infer as much."

Clarissa laughed again, more joyously than before; but she said nothing. Mr. Chick gazed at her plaintively.

"Don't let us interrupt," said Madame Wadham, smiling. "We should like to hear the lecture."

Hunt had risen. "I can offer you seats on this wheelbarrow," he said. "I recommend them. A wheelbarrow is very comfortable indeed. I know, for I have spent many hours sitting on one, when there was nobody to note it who might not approve it as an occupation for a boy who was supposed to be otherwise occupied." He stopped and looked at Mr. Chick. "Let's see. Where was I? How far had I got?"

"Fur 's th' big scale-beam," replied that gentleman promptly.

"Oh, yes. I must think a minute. I want to get my ideas in order. Pardon me, will you?"

"Yeah," Mr. Chick responded.

Mr. Hunt smiled. "The fact is, I am somewhat embarrassed. The distinguished audience —"

"Fiddlesticks!" said Madame Wadham. "You know I am quite accustomed to such diplomatic words. I know that they don't cut any ice, as my grandson would say, but are for the sole purpose of putting off the evil moment."

"That was the object," Hunt confessed. "Well, then, here goes. When —"

"Jiminy!" muttered Mr. Chick in despair. "Here comes Tum. He'll put y' off ag'in."

He had turned his head, having recognized the familiar step before it had left the road. Now the others heard the click of the gate, and a shambling step coming up the path. In time Mr. Tumbleberry shambled around the corner of the house.

"Good-morning, Tumbleberry," said Madame Wadham. "Mr. Hunt was just about to begin a little talk."

"Good-mornin', Mis' Wadham," Tumbleberry returned listlessly. His gaze rambled around the assembled company, and at last settled upon the confused and guilty Mr. Chick. "If y' 'low a man t' make a guess at th' subjec' 't Mr. Hunt's goin' t' talk on, I sh'd think 't 's th' force o' gravity, an' mebbe bo'ts." A smile rippled over the faces of the audience, and a sudden crimson suffused Mr. Chick's cheek.

"What 'f 't is?" he muttered. "Guess a man 's got a right —"

"Yeah," Mr. Tumbleberry continued, taking no notice of Mr. Chick. "I should n't wonder a mite. Chick's al'ays wantin' t' know more 'n th' Lord meant him to. They ain't no manner o' sense 'n jest gratifyin' Chick's curiosity an' botherin' Mr. Hunt. Can't y' let a man take a vacation? 'F y' 're boun' t' keep 'is nose down t' th' grin'stun' 't lecturin', why, 't stan's to reason 't he'd like 't better 'f he'd 'a' had some experiments t' show off 'th 'is lecture. They most ginerally have 'em 't lectures, don't they?"

Mr. Hunt nodded. "When they are possible."

"There, y' see? An' here's Hunt jest got 'im a new dory, an' him wantin' t' go out in 'er, I think likely, an' you botherin' 'im about th' force o' gravity. He ain't got no int'rest in th' force o' gravity, not 't this present minute he ain't, I should n't wonder a mite. You c'n ask 'im. I ain't noways anxious t' have 'im go sailin' 'ginst 'is wishes, but I do hate t' see a man put upon by a feller 't don't know whether he's a-goin' t' sink 'r float 'r go up like a b'loon. I don't know 's I wonder at y', Chick, f'r y' 're jest th' shape 'f a b'loon."

Mr. Chick said nothing at all. He had turned sulky.

Mr. Hunt laughed. "The fact is," he said, "that Tumbleberry and I had an appointment. I think it would be a good idea for Chick to join us, and we'll go sailing in my dory. I know little or nothing about sailing, and it would be a favor to me."

Mr. Chick's face cleared. That put the matter on a different footing.

"Mis' Wadham c'n spare y', Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry put in, "jedgin' by th' 'mount y' 're a-doin' 't this present minute. Y' might 's well come. We may want han's t' work th' vessel."

Jean tried not to show her disappointment too plainly, and very wisely she said nothing.

"When three men have made up their minds to go sailing," Madame Wadham said, with a smile, "even in a dory, any opposition is worse than useless. I can spare Chick perfectly well, and I suggest that you get along with you — if that is what you want. That," she pursued in an aside to Jean, "makes it impossible for them not to follow my suggestion, you observe. An excellent principle to go upon, my dear; I recommend it."

Obediently, as was expected of her, Jean laughed a little. She still had her conscience with her, however, and her conscience did not wholly approve.

"But, Madame Wadham," she began, hesitating a little, "is it quite — quite straightforward, do you think, to suggest something that — that you do not entirely believe in?"

"Bless your heart, Jean dear," Madame Wadham answered, laughing, "I believe in it well enough, and they are bound to go. Why make it difficult? I have a conscience, but it does not nag me. I really do not care what they do — within limits — and I can spare Chick. Why should n't they go? The appear-

ance of authority is worth something, even if I have n't any. Does that shock you?"

"Of course not, dear Madame Wadham. But it is likely to blow hard by two or three o'clock. I only thought that —"

"Pooh, child!" Madame Wadham interrupted. "It usually blows hard by that time, about here. That won't hurt them. They may get wet, but if it blows hard enough they won't. Clarissa will put them up a lunch. Will you, Clarissa?"

"Certainly I will," Clarissa answered cheerfully. "Right away." She turned and went in, and they heard the pleasant noises of putting up the lunch.

Jean subsided uneasily. "They ain't nothin' t' be scairt about, Jean," boomed Mr. Tumbleberry cheerfully. "What's a leetle breeze o' wind? Y' most gin'rally need a pretty good breeze f'r a dory t' show what's in 'er, this dory o' Hunt's in special. I know 'er. Leg-o'-mutton sail, y' know, an' a leetle mite small 't that. I sha' n't git wet none t' speak on, bein' down tow'rds th' stern. It's th' crew, up forrard, 't gits all th' wet, 'f sh' throws any."

Mr. Chick showed unmistakable interest. "An' who 's th' crew, Tum?" he asked belligerently. "Tell m' that."

"Why, I'll tell y' cheerful', Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry replied, with an effort to soothe his ruffled feelings. "Mr. Hunt's th' owner an' passenger, an' I'm th' skipper an' cap'n, an' th' rest o' them 't goes 's the crew. It's th' duty o' th' crew t' handle sail

an' 'bey orders fr'm th' cap'n. An' th' crew, 'n addition thereto, lays along th' weather rail f'r ballast. Th' al'ays does that 'n th' big yachts, every last one. Y' could n't expect 't th' passenger an' owner 'd go 'long 's ballast, an' I ain't noways good ballast, but you, Chick, 're jest th' ticket. Mebbe some of y' 'll stick up above th' rail an' git wet, I think likely, but 't ain't no fault o' mine. 'F y' was built 'long my lines y' would n't. 'R on Hunt's either. Now don't y' go an' git mad, Chick, yit. They ain't no water handy t' cool y' off. Wait till we git a-goin' good, an' I guarantee 't th' spray an' all 'll keep y' fr'm havin' a rush o' blood t' y'r head."

Mr. Chick was about to make an angry retort, but Clarissa came out with the lunch. It completely filled one of the market baskets which was used for garden products. She handed it to Chick.

"There!" she said. "I guess that'll keep you quiet until afternoon."

"Jiminy!" ejaculated Mr. Chick. "Jedgin' b' th' heft 'f it, y' filled th' basket with rocks. What y' got into it, 'Rissa?"

"Oh," Clarissa answered carelessly, "just a little snack for three able-bodied men."

Madame Wadham laughed. "That's right, Clarissa. Keep them fed well."

"I've learned that much," Clarissa smiled.

On seeing the basket, Mr. Tumbleberry had started shambling toward the gate. He stopped and turned.

"C'me on, Chick," he bellowed. "Ain't y' goin' sailin', 'r what is it? Tide don't wait f'r no man. 'F y' ain't a-goin' y' 'd as well han' th' basket t' Mr. Hunt. We want t' start."

"A reminder for me," said Mr. Hunt, giving Mr. Chick no chance to reply. "Thank you, Madame Wadham, and good-bye. Good-bye, Jean. I wish you were to go, but the skipper says three is all. Perhaps to-morrow, if you can sail a dory. Can you?"

"I can," said Jean briefly.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Hunt, evidently surprised. "Why did n't you tell me? It might have changed the arrangement."

"I was n't asked," said Jean.

"Indeed," Mr. Hunt observed thoughtfully. "Remiss, very. I'm sorry. Won't do it again, I promise you. Good-bye, Mr. Killian."

Mr. Hunt strode after Mr. Tumbleberry, and Mr. Chick waddled after Mr. Hunt. Mr. Chick had exchanged a smile with Clarissa, but had completely forgotten the others. He was a man of a single purpose, and he was carrying the basket.

Mr. Tumbleberry said nothing on the way down to the wharf, although he was twice racked with coughing. It was not far to the wharf. Mr. Hunt glanced up thoughtfully at the sound of the coughing, but he said nothing; and Mr. Chick looked surprised and worried, but he said nothing either. They walked fast, and Mr. Chick was almost running.

"'T seems t' me, Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry boomed, when he had recovered from his second fit of coughing, "'t y' 're in a consid'rable 'f a hurry. Y' know th' dory's tied. I cal'late she'll wait f'r us, 'n' y' won't have t' jump neither."

"I ain't in no hurry neither, Tum," panted Mr. Chick. "I 's only a-tryin' t' keep up 'th you, an' I was thinkin' 't I was n't a-goin' t' make it."

Mr. Hunt smiled. "My fault," he said. "I forget. We won't go so fast."

"Suit y'rself. Suit y'rself," Mr. Chick murmured. "Y' ain't got red o' that cold on y'r chist, have y', Tum?"

"'T don't amount t' nothin'," replied Mr. Tumbleberry hastily. "Where 'll we go? Down t' th' breakwater?"

"Breakwater!" muttered Mr. Chick in disgust. "Breakwater an' lobster b'oys. What's th' use o' goin' t' th' breakwater? 'T ain't nothin'."

"I have a sort of fancy," said Mr. Hunt, "for the open sea — if that is what it is — the open water beyond there." He waved his arm. "Can we go out beyond the breakwater?"

"Y' mean int' th' bay," boomed Mr. Tumbleberry kindly. "That ain't what we sh'd call the open sea. Y' would n't git t' th' open sea f'r a c'nsid'rable spell. This here little dory o' yours would n't make it in a day, I think likely, not t' git back ag'in. 'Course y' c'n go out beyond th' breakwater. Ain't it your vessel?"

Mr. Hunt smiled. "That was my impression," he said gently. "Let's go out there, if you have no objection."

"I ain't no 'bjection 'n th' world," Mr. Tumbleberry replied. "'T might make Chick a mite sick, I should n't wonder, he bein' one o' these 'ere hearty eaters, but you an' me'll be all right, I think likely, 'th our build. What's a leetle seasick? 'T ain't nothin' wuth mentionin'."

"Sha'n't be seasick neither," muttered Mr. Chick angrily. "Y' speak f'r y'rself, Tum."

"It's curious," observed Mr. Hunt, "that seasickness should be regarded as something to be ashamed of. It is n't, and it is n't any reflection on a man's seamanship. I've heard of shipmasters who were sick for the first few days of every voyage. No doubt you've known such men."

"Lord, yes," Mr. Tumbleberry bellowed cheerfully. "I said 't wa'n't nothin'."

Mr. Tumbleberry seated himself near the stern of the dory — too near to give room for the long tiller — but that did not occur to him as a disadvantage. He rested his arm on the tiller and stretched his long legs out before him, and got away from the wharf by the simple expedient of casting off all fastenings. The dory drifted clear of the wharf, as the wind happened to be right for that, and was bound for the shore at the head of the wharf. The crew, Mr. Chick, was kept busy for a few minutes with getting up the sails, but he managed to do it in time, with some

help from the owner. Then, as she began to draw away from her perilous position, which had been getting more perilous every moment, Mr. Chick, still standing, turned and glared at Mr. Tumbleberry.

"What y' a-doin', Tum?" he said in a shrill, querulous voice. "Y' mighty nigh run us ashore."

Mr. Tumbleberry was not disturbed. "Ne' min', Chick. Th' ain't no danger," he returned soothingly. "We're a-drorin' off now, an' what 'f we did go ashore? They would n't nothin' 'a' happened. Rudder might 'a' been druv out o' th' gudgeons, but nothin' 't y' could n't 'a' 'tended to. Y' might 'a' had t' git out t' set 'er in ag'in, but —"

"*I* might 'a' had t' git out!" Mr. Chick shouted indignantly. "Git into th' water? I'd like t' know how y' make that out."

"Certain, I'll tell y', Chick. You're the crew. That's why. Now, I'd set down 'f I was you. We're li'ble t' strike a breeze o' wind when we git aroun' th' corner o' th' wharf, an' it might throw y' right o'board. 'Course, I'd *try* t' pick y' up, but these here dories don't manage none too quick."

"Manage quick 'nough," grumbled Mr. Chick, "'f they's any sort o' manager a-steerin' of 'em." But he sat down.

It was comparatively smooth sailing until they got outside the breakwater. Mr. Tumbleberry was very comfortable indeed. The boat seemed to need no attention at all. He was still reclining in the

stern, resting one arm on the tiller, and that just suited Mr. Tumbleberry. To be sure, he had hard work to keep back his cough. He had an almost irresistible desire to cough, until circumstances made him forget it. Next Mr. Tumbleberry sat Mr. Hunt, his long legs in a rather awkward position, the space for them being somewhat restricted because of the disposal of Mr. Tumbleberry's legs, and Mr. Chick sat on the forward thwart, with the mast and the jib sheet, his legs tangled in the grapnel. It was not a large dory, and was not decked over at all.

Mr. Tumbleberry's experience with dories was strictly limited. Indeed, his experience had been limited to skiffs, and very little of that. When they got outside the breakwater, and a little out of the lee of the land, the breeze seemed to have freshened and the sea to have become suddenly rough. The sea was just the wrong length for the dory, and she dived into every oncoming wave and threw spray high. The fountain of spray was then seized by the wind and blown upon Mr. Chick, who served excellently as a shield for the others. A skilful man at the helm could have made it more comfortable for Mr. Chick, but Mr. Tumbleberry was not such a man.

At the third drenching Mr. Chick glared fiercely at Mr. Tumbleberry.

"Jumpin' Jiminy, Tum!" he shouted. "What y' a-tryin' t' do? Y' got me soakin' wet a'ready. Can't y' ease 'er when y' see a sea a-comin'? Might 's well put me o'board an' done 'th it."

Mr. Tumbleberry stirred slightly. "Did y' git wet that time?" he bellowed. "That's too bad. I'd give y' my oil coat, but I did n't make out t' git me no oil skins. Sailors most gin'rally don't mind a leetle bit o' water, but I guess y' 'll have t' lay down 'long th' gunwale 'f you do."

Mr. Chick sputtered, but no intelligible sounds issued from him. With considerable difficulty he lay down along the gunwale, stretching from thwart to thwart, with no support whatever for his back, except an oar, which happened to be there temporarily.

"Y' ought t' be careful not t' be layin' y'r heft on them oars, Chick," warned Mr. Tumbleberry. "Fust thing y' know y' 'll be a-breakin' of 'em. We 're li'ble t' want 'em any minute, an' then where'd y' be 'f they 's broke int' forty pieces? Jest take y'r heft up an' lay on 'em easy."

"Take m' heft up!" shouted Mr. Chick in shrill scorn. "How c'n I take m' heft up? Can't noways do it."

"Y'r neck 's on one th'art," Mr. Tumbleberry boomed calmly, "an' y'r feet on another. Y' 'd ought t' know how. Most anybody 'd know."

Mr. Chick was not in a position to make a dignified retort. Moreover, at that moment, the bow of the dory lifted high, smashed down upon the next wave, and sent up a solid sheet of water. The wind caught it, as was to be expected, and it came down upon Mr. Chick's stomach with a sharp spanking

sound. Mr. Chick gave a yell, and scrambled up, sputtering in wrath.

"Did kind o' wet y', did n't it, Chick?" remarked Mr. Tumbleberry. "I guess I better keep 'er off a mite. Ne' min', Chick. Lay down ag'in, an' y' 'll be all right. They won't no more sockdolagers come like that one. Don't y' git mad, Chick."

Mr. Chick lay down again, saying nothing, and Mr. Tumbleberry kept her off a mite. It was a slow process because the tiller was cramped by his body, and because he neglected to ease off the main sheet. Mr. Hunt, who had had no experience at all, saw that it should be done, and did it.

"She min's 'er helm better so, y' see," observed Mr. Tumbleberry. "I left it a-purpose so 's you could do it. Y' 'd ought t' always let out y'r main sheet when y' 're keepin' of 'er off."

It was easier going when they had the wind abeam, and Mr. Chick abandoned his worries for contemplation of the clouds. He rolled more or less, but there was the mast to keep him from rolling over. It was as easy as a cradle and much like one. What does a little roll amount to? Mr. Hunt looked out over the tumbling water to windward, and was surprised to see how soon the water lost its tumble and merely sparkled in the sun. The view to the other side, toward the shore, was completely cut off by the sail, and nothing could be seen there unless a man stooped almost double and looked under the sail. It was painful for Mr. Tumbleberry to double himself

up like a jack-knife, and nobody had n't ought t' expect it, in reason. So he reclined in a state of bliss, giving no more attention to the management of the dory than was absolutely required, seeing nothing at all and his mind a blank.

In this happy state they continued for some time, Mr. Chick speculating about the little clouds and Mr. Tumbleberry speculating about nothing. Suddenly Mr. Hunt, whose mind was alert if he did have no experience of sailing of any kind whatever, saw what was apparently a net, of about the height of Mr. Chick, looming forward of the mast and close aboard.

"Hello," he remarked quietly. "What is this?"

Mr. Chick sat up so quickly that he fell between the seats. "Hard down y'r helum!" he shrieked in a shrill falsetto. "Can't y' see nothin', Tum? Want t' get us swamped? Quick! Hard down! Bring 'er up!"

Mr. Tumbleberry put the helm down in a leisurely manner. He hated to move. "What's th' matter, Chick?" he boomed. "Y' goin' t' have a fit, 'r what is it? 'Course I c'n see. I don't see nothin' onusual. What d' you see? Sea-sarpint? I think likely, jedgin' b' y'r actions."

"What d' I see?" yelled Mr. Chick. "Fish-trap, that's what I see, an' it's a-goin' t' ketch us, that's what. You wait."

Mr. Tumbleberry did not have long to wait. Fortunately the dory had begun to come into the wind,

but not enough, and they struck the net hard and heeled so far that a considerable volume of water came pouring over the weather rail upon Mr. Chick. A scene of great confusion followed. Mr. Chick was frightened, and Mr. Tumbleberry was sufficiently frightened to bestir himself and do his best to help get the sails in; and, incidentally, to get pretty wet in doing it.

At last the dory lay bobbing beside the fish-trap, her sails down and the oars out, and in the hands of Mr. Chick. Mr. Tumbleberry once more reclined in the stern.

"Y' see, Chick," he said, in a voice which he tried to make hearty, but which shook a little, "'t we needed th' oars, an' it's lucky 't y' did n't bust 'em up, layin' on 'em. Y' 'll have t' row home, I think likely. 'T ain't right dead int' th' wind, an' y' 'll make it." Chick said nothing, and Mr. Tumbleberry cast his eye over the fish-trap. It was swarming with fish. "I'd like t' know what right he had t' put that 'ere trap right 'n m' way. They's consid-'rable many fish into it," he added thoughtfully. "We might 's well take our pay f'r th' trouble an' resk, an' take it in fish. Ain't y' got nothin' t' dip 'em out with?"

"'Course I ain't," Mr. Chick replied shortly. "Could n't reach 'em 'f they was an'thin'."

"Might use y'r hat," Mr. Tumbleberry pursued. "Y' could git 'em easy 'f y' was t' climb down th' other side o' th' net."

"Yah," Mr. Chick exclaimed scornfully. "Might dive off 'n th' top 'f a pole an' ketch 'em in m' teeth. I ain't a-goin' t' do it, Tum, robbin' fish-traps."

That seemed to be decisive, and Mr. Tumbleberry turned regretfully away. "'T's a pity t' let all them good fish go t' waste," he said, "but 'f y' won't, y' won't, an' that's an end —"

At this point Mr. Tumbleberry was seized with a paroxysm of coughing. The wetting and the wind were too much for him. The wetting had been pretty thorough, and the wind had freshened, and was cool, and it seemed to Mr. Tumbleberry that it blew right through his skeleton and whistled about his ribs. It was the hardest paroxysm that he had ever known, and it overcame him completely, leaving scarcely enough strength to enable him to cover his mouth with his hand. Mr. Chick was gazing at him with a look of intense anxiety, and Mr. Hunt, taken by surprise, was solicitous, although he did not show it. What was there to be done? They had no remedies of any kind. There seemed nothing to do but to make Mr. Tumbleberry as comfortable as possible, and he had already done that for himself.

At last the fit of coughing stopped suddenly. Mr. Tumbleberry glanced at his hand as he drew it away, saw blood upon it, and quickly dipped it overboard. Mr. Chick had not seen, he noted, but Mr. Hunt had caught a glimpse, a fact which he failed to note.

"Th' water's pretty cool," he observed, in a voice

lower than usual. "Does 'Rissa drag 'er hand o'board when y' 're rowin' of 'er out of an evenin', Chick? 'Must make y' think 't 's a board broadside to, I should n't wonder a mite. Why 'n't y' row, Chick? We 'better be startin', 'f y' ask me. M' hand ain't draggin'. Water 's too cold f'r it t' be real' comf'table."

Mr. Chick was on the point of making an angry retort, but thought better of it.

"I wish 't y' 'd see a doctor, Tum," he said gently. "That col' 'n y'r chist ain't a-gittin' no better, an' 'f y' 'd stop in an' see Smithson, nex' time y' 're down his way, mebbe he c'd do somethin' f'r it. 'R y' might take a swaller o' liniment. They say 't a swaller o' liniment 's good f'r them things. A bottle, now, might do y' a power o' good."

"Yeah," remarked Mr. Tumbleberry scornfully. "'R a tin can might. They 's easy come by 's bottles. An' ginuine patty de foi gras is recommended f'r toothache. I wonder did Clarissa put any 'n 'er lunch. Le' 's see, Chick."

Mr. Hunt said nothing, but looked thoughtfully at Mr. Tumbleberry as that gentleman dipped into the lunch basket, and Mr. Chick began to row. They were already clear of the net of the trap, which had come near to capsizing them, and it was clear enough rowing, but hard work.

"I wish 't this gosh blamed boom 's out o' m' way," he observed, stopping his rowing. "It rams m' arm every stroke. Can't y' noways git 't fixed?

I'm askin' you, Tum. Y' say 't y' 're the skipper, but y' don't do nothin'."

"'F they was a toppin'-lift," Mr. Tumbleberry returned, "y' c'd h'ist th' boom out o' y'r way."

"Ain't no toppin'-lift," growled Mr. Chick, "an' y' know they ain't. I asked y' how we c'd fix it."

"I ain't thought 'f any real' good way yit," answered Mr. Tumbleberry. "Lashin' 'er up ag'inst th' mast'd make 'er top heavy. Ne' min', Chick. Y' ain't got fur t' go, an' when we git t' th' breakwater y' c'n take 't easy. We got time enough."

Meanwhile Mr. Tumbleberry was still busy nibbling at the lunch. It was almost too much for Mr. Chick.

"Don't y' go an' eat up th' food, Tum," he said, "till we git a chancet at it."

"Y' need n't to worry none," Mr. Tumbleberry said. "They's a plenty. I'd take y'r oar 'f I was able, but I ain't. Y' 're 'most t' th' breakwater, anyways."

"Why don't you sail in?" asked Mr. Hunt quietly. "Of course I don't know, but I can't see any reason why we should n't."

"Sho!" said Mr. Chick. "We might. I did n't think of that. I c'n keep a lookout ahead so 's Tum won't run down th' breakwater. I'll h'ist th' sails ag'in. Ain't no traps ahead of us, anyways."

"Get sail on 'er, Chick," bellowed Mr. Tumbleberry, feeling that he ought to have a hand in so important a change.

Mr. Chick, with the halliards in his hands, turned and glared at Mr. Tumbleberry. "I's jest a-goin' t' do it," he said, with some heat, "'f y' had n't 'a' stopped me. What's th' sense 'n that? I s'pose y' think I ain't got nothin' t' do but t' put m' han' t' my mouth an' yell 'Aye, aye, Cap'n Tumbleberry. Git sail on 'er.' Huh! 'D 'a' been done b' now 'f y' le' me do what I was doin'."

Mr. Chick proceeded with his duties with rather more violence than was absolutely necessary.

"Now, Chick," boomed Mr. Tumbleberry soothingly, "y' want t' be a mite easy, 'r y' 'll break some o' them ropes, I should n't wonder a mite, 'r pull th' mast plumb through th' bottom, fust thing y' know, an' then where'll y' be? I'll tell y', in th' water, an' y' 're likely t' stay there f'r all I c'd do. 'Course, y' might have a rush o' blood t' th' head, that 'd take away y'r senses, what y' got of 'em. They would n't be no objection t' that. 'F y' 're a-goin' t' be drownded, th' more senseless y' be th' better. That's th' way I look at it. It stan's t' reason."

At this point hostilities were suspended, and they devoted their attention to the lunch. It kept them occupied until they got in.

CHAPTER XXI

Mr. Hunt, Mr. Tumbleberry and Mr. Chick sailed together fairly often after that, although Mr. Tumbleberry was willing enough to turn the steering over to Mr. Hunt. The fact was that Mr. Tumbleberry was tired, too tired even to steer, and liked best to get himself stretched out upon the thwarts and do nothing. This behavior on his part was not unusual and attracted no attention from Mr. Chick, but Mr. Hunt could not help wondering. He did not know Mr. Tumbleberry as well as Mr. Chick knew him; but as Mr. Tumbleberry manifested less and less desire to fish from the wharf, even Mr. Chick's wonder was aroused. It seemed to be too hard work to hold a line. The most that he could be prevailed upon to do was to sit with a fish-line dangling from listless fingers, the sunshine hot upon him, and doze and cough. The flecks of blood were more frequent, but he was pretty successful in concealing the fact, although he could no longer suppress his coughing.

Jean was a good dory sailor, infinitely better than Mr. Tumbleberry. It became the regular thing for her and Mr. Hunt to be out in the dory together. Mr. Hunt's two weeks were up long since, and no mention was made of his leaving. Madame Wadham asked about it, and Jean flushed faintly and slowly.

"He seems to have forgotten it," said Jean, "and I don't like to speak of it. He likes it here."

"But your father," asked Madame Wadham, "how does he like it?"

"Oh," Jean answered, relieved, "he likes it, I'm sure."

So, in the course of time, Madame Wadham spoke to Mr. Killian. "Hunt 's not leaving yet, John, is he?"

"Why, no," he said in surprise, "not so far as I know. Have you heard anything of it?"

"Don't you wish," she asked, "that he would?"

He laughed. "No," he said. "I'm satisfied. I like the man. We have some interests in common. I'd be glad to have him stay indefinitely."

"Well," she retorted dryly, "it looks as if he was going to."

He laughed again, but made no other reply. It was after that brief conversation that she remarked to Mrs. Druce that it looked like a joke on her. Cynthia Druce must have understood, for she smiled understandingly, but Madame Wadham did not elucidate.

So it came about that Jean continued to sail with Hunt, and to train him in the way he should go — for a dory sailor. They were out in all kinds of weather: some days were hot and almost breathless, when they floated and drifted and were uncomfortable; some were wet and stormy, when they went up and down great green seas whose tops were

breaking in rumbles of foam, and they had thrills without end, and came in, soaked, but with their eyes shining; but most of those days were days of the regular southwest wind, increasing to a fairly stiff breeze at two or three o'clock, then diminishing to a light air at sunset. And Hunt became as skilful as a man can become who was brought up on a farm; and the summer got on, and it was August.

Now, there was an arrangement in prospect for August. Clarissa had made the arrangement. She and Chick were to be married. She had made the arrangement because there seemed nothing to be gained by waiting for Mr. Chick to get around to it, and he had been willing enough — even anxious — for her to attend to it.

"I ain't had no 'xperience," he said plaintively, when she suggested it to him. "I ain't never been married, an' I don't know nothin' about it. You do it, 'Rissa."

She laughed gayly. "All right, Chick. I'll do it, 'though I've never been married either."

Mr. Chick muttered something about women knowing more about them things anyway, and so it was settled. She had further arranged that there was to be no change whatever at Madame Wadham's, a disposition which left everybody satisfied except, possibly, Mr. Chick. He was not consulted; but he would not object. He never objected.

Mr. Chick felt shy about mentioning the arrangement, but had to tell Mr. Tumbleberry. He could

see no escape from that ordeal. So he took his courage in both hands, and tried to break the news gently. To his surprise, the announcement did not seem to disturb Mr. Tumbleberry, or even to interest him. That fact disturbed Mr. Chick greatly. He knew well enough that, a few months before, the announcement would have been the signal for a flood of rough jokes, the rougher the better. Now only one thing occurred to him.

"Don't y' b' forgittin', Chick," said Tumbleberry in his old booming tones, but not so strong as they had been, "'t they'll be a fee due t' th' matreemonial agency. 'F they do 's well in ev'ry case 's they have in yours th' business 'll be a money maker."

Mr. Chick's face was getting redder and redder. "Matreemonial agency!" he cried indignantly. "Huh! What 've they done for ary fee-money? Jest tell m' that. Why have I got t' pay 'em a fee?"

"Ain't I explained it all t' you more 'n once?" Mr. Tumbleberry asked patiently. "'F y' did n't git it, I'll go over 't all ag'in. Y' see, Chick —"

At this point Mr. Tumbleberry was seized with a fit of coughing. It seemed to Mr. Chick to be a very hard seizure, and when it was over there were unmistakable signs of blood on Mr. Tumbleberry's lips and on his hands.

"Did y' take that pain-killer, Tum?" asked Mr. Chick anxiously. "Don't y' want I should git y' a bottle o' liniment?"

Mr. Tumbleberry shook his head. "I ain't took nothin'," he replied, "nor I ain't a-goin' to."

"Well, but Tum," Mr. Chick insisted, "y' 'd ought to. Ain't that blood on y'r lips?"

"Like enough," Mr. Tumbleberry answered carelessly, glancing at his hand. "I cut m' finger on one o' them tin cans, an' swiped m' mouth 'th it, I should n't wonder a mite. 'S nothin'. As I was sayin', Chick, th' fee t' th' agency 'll be five dollars. 'S a big discount, an' a special price t' you, 'count o' not havin' s' much t' do 's we cal'lated."

"Uh-huh," said Mr. Chick. "I believe y', all right. What did y' do? Tell m' that."

Mr. Tumbleberry turned a reproachful eye upon him. "D' y' want," he asked, "'t I should go over the whole list f'r you? 'F y' insist on it I'll git me my list an' go over it with you, every last item."

Mr. Chick thought it hardly worth while to put Mr. Tumbleberry to the trouble of making out a list of imaginary services, although he did not doubt that he could if he was put to it. He could do more than that. What was the difference, anyway? He could not remember the time when Tumbleberry had seen five dollars of his own.

"All right, Tum," he said. "I'll give y' th' fee after th' — after th' — afterwards."

"After th' weddin', Chick," Mr. Tumbleberry said, confirming. "We aim t' please, 's th' feller says. Sat'sfaction guaranteed 'r money cheerfully

refunded, an' no questions, 'f it's within th' limit set b' law."

Mr. Chick was hurrying away when Mr. Tumbleberry's voice again smote upon his ear.

"My best t' 'Rissa," he thundered, "an' say t' her 't I hope sh' don't never have no regrets, even when they 's little Chicks. Lord!" he added in what passed, with Mr. Tumbleberry, for an aside. "Think of 'em!"

Mr. Chick, still smarting under that aside, met Jean and Mr. Hunt, just starting for a sail. He told them of Tumbleberry's coughing fit and its results. Jean was shocked, and said that she must go and see him at his house.

"Don't," said Mr. Hunt hastily. "I would n't advise it. I have known of it for some time. I know very little about consumption, but I should think that Tumbleberry had little time left. It can't do any good. Nothing can."

"But it seems so heartless to just let things take their course," said Jean. "At least I'll tell Madame Wadham. She'll know what to do."

"If you like."

But Jean put it off, for one reason or another. Clarissa's wedding was to take place in less than a week, and Chick, naturally, was too busy to think much about anything but that. And Madame Wadham was busy also. There was a great deal to be done. Madame Wadham insisted on doing everything for her people properly.

The wedding was to take place at Madame Wadham's own church. Clarissa had no prejudices. She did not care where she was married, from the City Clerk's office to the Catholic Cathedral, so long as the ceremony was performed by a duly qualified official, and it was a small-minded person who would look into even that matter too meticulously. She went down in a taxicab with Madame Wadham, while Jean and her father followed close behind in a second taxi. Mr. Tumbleberry was asked, but would have nothing to do with any such absurd affair, and Mr. Hunt elected to stay behind with Mr. Tumbleberry. Mr. Chick went down in the street car.

They were married with all the trimmings, much to Mr. Chick's distress, but the ordeal could not last forever, and it was over in the course of time. The wedding guests returned in the same taxicab, but Mr. and Mrs. Chick dismissed the other, preferring to take the street car. Madame Wadham remonstrated.

"Thank you, Madame Wadham," said Clarissa. "But Chick wants to go this way, and it does n't make the least difference in the world to me. You have been very kind all through, and I am grateful. Don't tell him," she added in a whisper, "that it does n't save anything. It would only distress him."

Madame Wadham smiled, patted Clarissa's shoulder, and kissed her.

"Bless you, Clarissa," she said, "I won't. Chick's a lucky man to have you to take care of him. I'm

glad to believe that it's going to turn out a great success for both of you."

Clarissa laughed. "Oh, it will," she replied. "Chick's a good man, and a kind one. That's more than you can say of most of 'em that are better to look at. Good-bye, Madame Wadham. I'll be home very soon after you, and you'll hardly know anything's different."

Mr. Chick was shy and rather silent throughout the ride. When they were nearly at the end of the line, and the wharf came in sight, he began to perk up, and to look for Mr. Tumbleberry. There was a small but a dense crowd of people gathered at one side of the wharf, all looking over the stringpiece.

"Wonder what they 's lookin' at," remarked Mr. Chick. "I don't see Tum anywheres. He's most giner'ly where they 's a crowd. I guess he's there, somewheres. Mebbe a fare o' fish. 'F y' jest as leevs, 'Rissa, let's you an' me go an' see what's th' excitement."

Clarissa had no objection, and they went. The crowd parted to let them through.

"It's Hunt's dory," said Mr. Chick, more at sea than ever. "Wonder what 't is."

Then he looked down into the dory. Tum was there, somewheres. He was stretched out on the thwarts, motionless, with a handkerchief over his face. He was alone in the dory. Mr. Hunt was not to be seen.

It took Mr. Chick some moments to take in the

significance of it all. He could see — not very clearly — what the handkerchief was meant to conceal. Blindly, he turned to Clarissa. He could not speak. He could only motion her to look. His throat was working queerly.

Clarissa had given one look, and had turned back to Mr. Chick. "I'm so sorry, Chick!" she crooned. "I'm so sorry for you! I can't be for Tum. He is out of it at last, free from pain and trouble. But I'm sorry for you."

"But, 'Rissa," he quavered, "who could 'a' done it? Tum ain't never hurt nobody. Who could 'a' done it?"

"Hush, dear!" she said, trying to quiet him. "Nobody did it. It must have been a hemorrhage, one that they could n't stop."

"It was," said Mr. Hunt's voice, close beside them. "We were sailing about the harbor when it happened. I did everything possible under the circumstances. I have just got back from telephoning. There is nothing to be done until they come. You'd better go up to the house. I'll look after him."

Mr. Chick had turned away, and was walking blindly up the wharf. Clarissa hurried after him, threw her arm over his shoulder, and, together, they walked up the hill.

THE END

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